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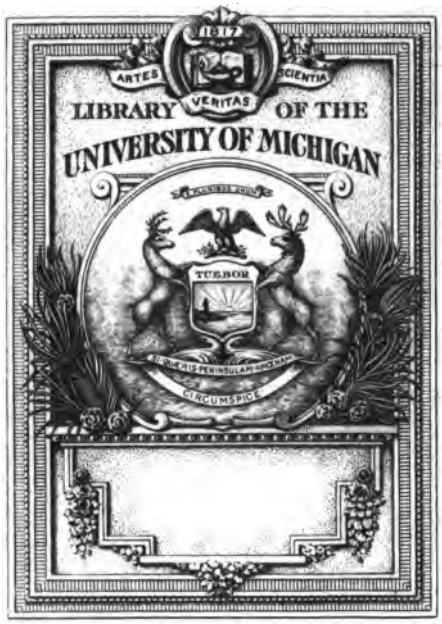

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Riverside Edition

THE WRITINGS

OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME IX.

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POEMS

III.

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS *jeu d'esprit* was extemporized, I may fairly say, so rapidly was it written, purely for my own amusement and with no thought of publication. I sent daily instalments of it to a friend in New York, the late Charles F. Briggs. He urged me to let it be printed, and I at last consented to its anonymous publication. The secret was kept till after several persons had laid claim to its authorship.

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Reader! walk up at once (it will soon be too late),
and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate

A FABLE FOR CRITICS:

OR, BETTER,

(I LIKE, AS A THING THAT THE READER'S FIRST FANCY MAY STRIKE,
AN OLD-FASHIONED TITLE-PAGE,
SUCH AS PRESENTS A TABULAR VIEW OF THE VOLUME'S CONTENTS),

A GLANCE AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES

(MRS. MALAPROP'S WORD)

FROM THE TUB OF DIOGENES;

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY,

THAT IS,

A SERIES OF JOKES

By A Wonderful Quiz,

WHO ACCOMPANIES HIMSELF WITH A RUB-A-DUB-DUB, FULL OF SPIRIT AND GRACE,
ON THE TOP OF THE TUB.

Set forth in October, the 31st day,
In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.

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To

CHARLES F. BRIGGS

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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It being the commonest mode of procedure, I premise a few candid remarks

To the Reader: —

This trifle, begun to please only myself and my own private fancy, was laid on the shelf. But some friends, who had seen it, induced me, by dint of saying they liked it, to put it in print. That is, having come to that very conclusion, I asked their advice when 't would make no confusion. For though (in the gentlest of ways) they had hinted it was scarce worth the while, I should doubtless have printed it.

I began it, intending a Fable, a frail, slender thing, rhyme-ywinged, with a sting in its tail. But, by addings and alterings not previously planned, digressions chance-hatched, like birds' eggs in the sand, and dawdlings to suit every whimsey's demand (always freeing the bird which I held in my hand, for the two perched, perhaps out of reach, in the tree), — it grew by degrees to the size which you see. I was like the old woman that carried the calf, and my neighbors, like hers, no doubt, wonder and laugh; and when, my strained arms with their grown burthen full, I call it my Fable, they call it a bull.

Having scrawled at full gallop (as far as that goes) in a style that is neither good verse nor bad

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prose, and being a person whom nobody knows, some people will say I am rather more free with my readers than it is becoming to be, that I seem to expect them to wait on my leisure in following wherever I wander at pleasure, that, in short, I take more than a young author's lawful ease, and laugh in a queer way so like Mephistopheles, that the Public will doubt, as they grope through my rhythm, if in truth I am making fun *of* them or *with* them.

So the excellent Public is hereby assured that the sale of my book is already secured. For there is not a poet throughout the whole land but will purchase a copy or two out of hand, in the fond expectation of being amused in it, by seeing his betters cut up and abused in it. Now, I find, by a pretty exact calculation, there are something like ten thousand bards in the nation, of that special variety whom the Review and Magazine critics call *lofty* and *true*, and about thirty thousand (*this* tribe is increasing) of the kinds who are termed *full of promise* and *pleasing*. The Public will see by a glance at this schedule, that they cannot expect me to be over-sedulous about courting *them*, since it seems I have got enough fuel made sure of for boiling my pot.

As for such of our poets as find not their names mentioned once in my pages, with praises or blames, let them SEND IN THEIR CARDS, without further DELAY, to my friend G. P. PUTNAM, Esquire, in Broadway, where a LIST will be kept with the strictest regard to the day and the hour of receiv-

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ing the card. Then, taking them up as I chance to have time (that is, if their names can be twisted in rhyme), I will honestly give each his PROPER POSITION, at the rate of ONE AUTHOR to each NEW EDITION. Thus a PREMIUM is offered sufficiently HIGH (as the magazines say when they tell their best lie) to induce bards to CLUB their resources and buy the balance of every edition, until they have all of them fairly been run through the mill.

One word to such readers (judicious and wise) as read books with something behind the mere eyes, of whom in the country, perhaps, there are two, including myself, gentle reader, and you. All the characters sketched in this slight *jeu d'esprit*, though, it may be, they seem, here and there, rather free, and drawn from a somewhat too cynical standpoint, are *meant* to be faithful, for that is the grand point, and none but an owl would feel sore at a rub from a jester who tells you, without any subterfuge, that he sits in Diogenes' tub.

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though it well may be reckoned, of all composition, the species at once most delightful and healthy, is a thing which an author, unless he be wealthy and willing to pay for that kind of delight, is not, in all instances, called on to write, though there are, it is said, who, their spirits to cheer, slip in a new title-page three times a year, and in this way snuff up an imaginary savor of that sweetest of dishes, the popular favor, — much as if a starved painter should fall to and treat the Ugolino inside to a picture of meat.

You remember (if not, pray turn backward and look) that, in writing the preface which ushered my book, I treated you, excellent Public, not merely with a cool disregard, but downright cavalierly. Now I would not take back the least thing I then said, though I thereby could butter both sides of my bread, for I never could see that an author owed aught to the people he solaced, diverted, or taught; and, as for mere fame, I have long ago learned that the persons by whom it is finally earned are those with whom *your* verdict weighed not a pin, unsustained by the higher court sitting within.

But I wander from what I intended to say, — that you have, namely, shown such a liberal way of

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thinking, and so much æsthetic perception of anonymous worth in the handsome reception you gave to my book, spite of some private piques (having bought the first thousand in barely two weeks), that I think, past a doubt, if you measured the phiz of yours most devotedly, Wonderful Quiz, you would find that its vertical section was shorter, by an inch and two tenths, or 'twixt that and a quarter.

You have watched a child playing — in those wondrous years when belief is not bound to the eyes and the ears, and the vision divine is so clear and unmarred, that each baker of pies in the dirt is a bard? Give a knife and a shingle, he fits out a fleet, and, on that little mud-puddle over the street, his fancy, in purest good faith, will make sail round the globe with a puff of his breath for a gale, will visit, in barely ten minutes, all climes, and do the Columbus-feat hundreds of times. Or, suppose the young poet fresh stored with delights from that Bible of childhood, the Arabian Nights, he will turn to a crony and cry, "Jack, let's play that I am a Genius!" Jacky straightway makes Aladdin's lamp out of a stone, and, for hours, they enjoy each his own supernatural powers. This is all very pretty and pleasant, but then suppose our two urchins have grown into men, and both have turned authors, — one says to his brother, "Let's play we 're the American somethings or other, — say Homer or Sophocles, Goethe or Scott (only let them be big enough, no matter what). Come, you shall be Byron or Pope, which you choose: I 'll be

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Coleridge, and both shall write mutual reviews." So they both (as mere strangers) before many days send each other a cord of anonymous bays. Each, piling his epithets, smiles in his sleeve to see what his friend can be made to believe; each, reading the other's unbiased review, thinks — Here 's pretty high praise, but no more than my due. Well, we laugh at them both, and yet make no great fuss when the same farce is acted to benefit us. Even I, who, if asked, scarce a month since, what Fudge meant, should have answered, the dear Public's critical judgment, begin to think sharp-witted Horace spoke sooth when he said, that the Public *sometimes* hit the truth.

In reading these lines, you perhaps have a vision of a person in pretty good health and condition; and yet, since I put forth my primary edition, I have been crushed, scorched, withered, used up and put down (by Smith with the cordial assistance of Brown), in all, if you put any faith in my rhymes, to the number of ninety-five several times, and, while I am writing, — I tremble to think of it, for I may at this moment be just on the brink of it, — Molybdostom, angry at being omitted, has begun a critique, — am I not to be pitied?[1]

Now I shall not crush *them* since, indeed, for that matter, no pressure I know of could render them flatter; nor wither, nor scorch them, — no action of fire could make either them or their arti-

[1] The wise Scandinavians probably called their bards by the queer-looking title of Scald, in a delicate way, as it were, just to hint to the world the hot water they always get into.

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cles drier; nor waste time in putting them down — I am thinking not their own self-inflation will keep them from sinking; for there 's this contradiction about the whole bevy, — though without the least weight, they are awfully heavy. No, my dear honest bore, *surdo fabulam narras*, they are no more to me than a rat in the arras. I can walk with the Doctor, get facts from the Don, or draw out the Lambish quintessence of John, and feel nothing more than a half-comic sorrow, to think that they all will be lying to-morrow tossed carelessly up on the waste-paper shelves, and forgotten by all but their half-dozen selves. Once snug in my attic, my fire in a roar, I leave the whole pack of them outside the door. With Hakluyt or Purchas I wander away to the black northern seas or barbaric Cathay; get *fou* with O'Shanter, and sober me then with that builder of brick-kilnish dramas, rare Ben; snuff Herbert, as holy as a flower on a grave; with Fletcher wax tender, o'er Chapman grow brave; with Marlowe or Kyd take a fine poet-rave; in Very, most Hebrew of Saxons, find peace; with Lycidas welter on vext Irish seas; with Webster grow wild, and climb earthward again, down by mystical Browne's Jacob's-ladder-like brain, to that spiritual Pepys (Cotton's version) Montaigne; find a new depth in Wordsworth, undreamed of before, that marvel, a poet divine who can bore. Or, out of my study, the scholar thrown off, Nature holds up her shield 'gainst the sneer and the scoff; the landscape, forever consoling and kind, pours her wine and her oil on

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the smarts of the mind. The waterfall, scattering its vanishing gems; the tall grove of hemlocks, with moss on their stems, like plashes of sunlight; the pond in the woods, where no foot but mine and the bittern's intrudes, where pitcher-plants purple and gentians hard by recall to September the blue of June's sky; these are all my kind neighbors, and leave me no wish to say aught to you all, my poor critics, but — pish! I 've buried the hatchet: I 'm twisting an allumette out of one of you now, and relighting my calumet. In your private capacities, come when you please, I will give you my hand and a fresh pipe apiece.

As I ran through the leaves of my poor little book, to take a fond author's first tremulous look, it was quite an excitement to hunt the *errata*, sprawled in as birds' tracks are in some kinds of strata (only these made things crookeder). Fancy an heir that a father had seen born well-featured and fair, turning suddenly wry-nosed, club-footed, squint-eyed, hair-lipped, wapper-jawed, carrot-haired, from a pride become an aversion, — my case was yet worse. A club-foot (by way of a change) in a verse, I might have forgiven, an *o*'s being wry, a limp in an *e*, or a cock in an *i*, — but to have the sweet babe of my brain served in *pi!* I am not queasy-stomached, but such a Thyestean banquet as that was quite out of the question.

In the edition now issued no pains are neglected, and my verses, as orators say, stand corrected. Yet some blunders remain of the Public's own make, which I wish to correct for my personal sake.

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For instance, a character drawn in pure fun and condensing the traits of a dozen in one, has been, as I hear, by some persons applied to a good friend of mine, whom to stab in the side, as we walked along chatting and joking together, would not be *my* way. I can hardly tell whether a question will ever arise in which he and I should by any strange fortune agree, but meanwhile my esteem for him grows as I know him, and, though not the best judge on earth of a poem, he knows what it is he is saying and why, and is honest and fearless, two good points which I have not found so rife I can easily smother my love for them, whether on my side or t' other.

For my other *anonymi*, you may be sure that I know what is meant by a caricature, and what by a portrait. There *are* those who think it is capital fun to be spattering their ink on quiet, unquarrelsome folk, but the minute the game changes sides and the others begin it, they see something savage and horrible in it. As for me I respect neither women nor men for their gender, nor own any sex in a pen. I choose just to hint to some causeless unfriends that, as far as I know, there are always two ends (and one of them heaviest, too) to a staff, and two parties also to every good laugh.

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A FABLE FOR CRITICS

PHŒBUS, sitting one day in a laurel-tree's shade,
Was reminded of Daphne, of whom it was made,
For the god being one day too warm in his wooing,
She took to the tree to escape his pursuing;
Be the cause what it might, from his offers she shrunk,
And, Ginevra-like, shut herself up in a trunk;
And, though 't was a step into which he had driven her,
He somehow or other had never forgiven her;
Her memory he nursed as a kind of a tonic,
Something bitter to chew when he 'd play the Byronic,
And I can't count the obstinate nymphs that he brought over
By a strange kind of smile he put on when he thought of her.
"My case is like Dido's," he sometimes remarked;
"When I last saw my love, she was fairly embarked
In a laurel, as *she* thought — but (ah, how Fate mocks!)
She has found it by this time a very bad box;
Let hunters from me take this saw when they need it, —

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You 're not always sure of your game when you 've treed it.
Just conceive such a change taking place in one's mistress!
What romance would be left? — who can flatter or kiss trees?
And, for mercy's sake, how could one keep up a dialogue
With a dull wooden thing that will live and will die a log, —
Not to say that the thought would forever intrude
That you 've less chance to win her the more she is wood?
Ah! it went to my heart, and the memory still grieves,
To see those loved graces all taking their leaves;
Those charms beyond speech, so enchanting but now,
As they left me forever, each making its bough!
If her tongue *had* a tang sometimes more than was right,
Her new bark is worse than ten times her old bite."

Now, Daphne — before she was happily treeified —
Over all other blossoms the lily had deified,
And when she expected the god on a visit
('T was before he had made his intentions explicit),
Some buds she arranged with a vast deal of care,
To look as if artlessly twined in her hair,
Where they seemed, as he said, when he paid his addresses,

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Like the day breaking through the long night of her tresses;
So whenever he wished to be quite irresistible,
Like a man with eight trumps in his hand at a whist-table
(I feared me at first that the rhyme was untwistable,
Though I might have lugged in an allusion to Cristabel), —
He would take up a lily, and gloomily look in it,
As I shall at the ——, when they cut up my book in it.

Well, here, after all the bad rhyme I've been spinning,
I've got back at last to my story's beginning:
Sitting there, as I say, in the shade of his mistress,
As dull as a volume of old Chester mysteries,
Or as those puzzling specimens which, in old histories,
We read of his verses — the Oracles, namely, —
(I wonder the Greeks should have swallowed them tamely,
For one might bet safely whatever he has to risk,
They were laid at his door by some ancient Miss Asterisk,
And so dull that the men who retailed them outdoors
Got the ill name of augurs, because they were bores, —)
First, he mused what the animal substance or herb is

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Would induce a mustache, for you know he 's *imberbis;*
Then he shuddered to think how his youthful position
Was assailed by the age of his son the physician;
At some poems he glanced, had been sent to him lately,
And the metre and sentiment puzzled him greatly;
"Mehercle! I 'd make such proceeding felonious, —
Have they all of them slept in the cave of Trophonius?
Look well to your seat, 't is like taking an airing
On a corduroy road, and that out of repairing;
It leads one, 't is true, through the primitive forest,
Grand natural features, but then one has no rest;
You just catch a glimpse of some ravishing distance,
When a jolt puts the whole of it out of existence, —
Why not use their ears, if they happen to have any?"
— Here the laurel-leaves murmured the name of poor Daphne.

"Oh, weep with me, Daphne," he sighed, "for you know it 's
A terrible thing to be pestered with poets!
But, alas, she is dumb, and the proverb holds good,
She never will cry till she 's out of the wood!
What would n't I give if I never had known of her?

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'T were a kind of relief had I something to groan over:
If I had but some letters of hers, now, to toss over,
I might turn for the nonce a Byronic philosopher,
And bewitch all the flats by bemoaning the loss of her.
One needs something tangible, though, to begin on, —
A loom, as it were, for the fancy to spin on;
What boots all your grist? it can never be ground
Till a breeze makes the arms of the windmill go round;
(Or, if 't is a water-mill, alter the metaphor,
And say it won't stir, save the wheel be well wet afore,
Or lug in some stuff about water 'so dreamily,' —
It is not a metaphor, though, 't is a simile);
A lily, perhaps, would set *my* mill a-going,
For just at this season, I think, they are blowing.
Here, somebody, fetch one; not very far hence
They 're in bloom by the score, 't is but climbing a fence;
There 's a poet hard by, who does nothing but fill his
Whole garden, from one end to t' other, with lilies;
A very good plan, were it not for satiety,
One longs for a weed here and there, for variety:
Though a weed is no more than a flower in disguise,
Which is seen through at once, if love give a man eyes."

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Now there happened to be among Phœbus's followers,
A gentleman, one of the omnivorous swallowers,
Who bolt every book that comes out of the press,
Without the least question of larger or less,
Whose stomachs are strong at the expense of their head, —
For reading new books is like eating new bread,
One can bear it at first, but by gradual steps he
Is brought to death's door of a mental dyspepsy.
On a previous stage of existence, our Hero
Had ridden outside, with the glass below zero;
He had been, 't is a fact you may safely rely on,
Of a very old stock a most eminent scion, —
A stock all fresh quacks their fierce boluses ply on,
Who stretch the new boots Earth 's unwilling to try on,
Whom humbugs of all shapes and sorts keep their eye on
Whose hair 's in the mortar of every new Zion,
Who, when whistles are dear, go directly and buy one,
Who think slavery a crime that we must not say fie on,
Who hunt, if they e'er hunt at all, with the lion
(Though they hunt lions also, whenever they spy one),
Who contrive to make every good fortune a wry one,
And at last choose the hard bed of honor to die on,
Whose pedigree, traced to earth's earliest years,
Is longer than anything else but their ears; —

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In short, he was sent into life with the wrong key,
He unlocked the door, and stept forth a poor donkey.
Though kicked and abused by his bipedal betters
Yet he filled no mean place in the kingdom of letters;
Far happier than many a literary hack,
He bore only paper-mill rags on his back
(For it makes a vast difference which side the mill
One expends on the paper his labor and skill);
So, when his soul waited a new transmigration,
And Destiny balanced 'twixt this and that station,
Not having much time to expend upon bothers,
Remembering he 'd had some connection with authors,
And considering his four legs had grown paralytic, —
She set him on two, and he came forth a critic.

Through his babyhood no kind of pleasure he took
In any amusement but tearing a book;
For him there was no intermediate stage
From babyhood up to straight-laced middle age;
There were years when he did n't wear coat-tails behind,
But a boy he could never be rightly defined;
Like the Irish Good Folk, though in length scarce a span,
From the womb he came gravely, a little old man;
While other boys' trousers demanded the toil
Of the motherly fingers on all kinds of soil,

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Red, yellow, brown, black, clayey, gravelly, loamy,
He sat in the corner and read Viri Romæ.
He never was known to unbend or to revel once
In base, marbles, hockey, or kick up the devil once;
He was just one of those who excite the benevolence
Of your old prigs who sound the soul's depths with a ledger,
And are on the lookout for some young men to "edgercate," as they call it, who won't be too costly,
And who 'll afterward take to the ministry mostly;
Who always wear spectacles, always look bilious,
Always keep on good terms with each *mater-familias*
Throughout the whole parish, and manage to rear
Ten boys like themselves, on four hundred a year:
Who, fulfilling in turn the same fearful conditions,
Either preach through their noses, or go upon missions.

In this way our Hero got safely to college,
Where he bolted alike both his commons and knowledge;
A reading-machine, always wound up and going,
He mastered whatever was not worth the knowing,
Appeared in a gown, with black waistcoat of satin,
To spout such a Gothic oration in Latin
That Tully could never have made out a word in it
(Though himself was the model the author preferred in it),

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And grasping the parchment which gave him in fee
All the mystic and-so-forths contained in A. B.,
He was launched (life is always compared to a sea)
With just enough learning, and skill for the using it,
To prove he 'd a brain, by forever confusing it.
So worthy St. Benedict, piously burning
With the holiest zeal against secular learning,
Nesciensque scienter, as writers express it,
Indoctusque sapienter a Roma recessit.

'T would be endless to tell you the things that he knew,
Each a separate fact, undeniably true,
But with him or each other they 'd nothing to do;
No power of combining, arranging, discerning,
Digested the masses he learned into learning;
There was one thing in life he had practical knowledge for
(And this, you will think, he need scarce go to college for), —
Not a deed would he do, nor a word would he utter,
Till he 'd weighed its relations to plain bread and butter.
When he left Alma Mater, he practised his wits
In compiling the journals' historical bits, —
Of shops broken open, men falling in fits,
Great fortunes in England bequeathed to poor printers,

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And cold spells, the coldest for many past winters, —
Then, rising by industry, knack, and address,
Got notices up for an unbiased press,
With a mind so well poised, it seemed equally made for
Applause or abuse, just which chanced to be paid for:
From this point his progress was rapid and sure,
To the post of a regular heavy reviewer.

And here I must say he wrote excellent articles
On Hebraical points, or the force of Greek particles;
They filled up the space nothing else was prepared for,
And nobody read that which nobody cared for;
If any old book reached a fiftieth edition,
He could fill forty pages with safe erudition:
He could gauge the old books by the old set of rules,
And his very old nothings pleased very old fools;
But give him a new book, fresh out of the heart,
And you put him at sea without compass or chart, —
His blunders aspired to the rank of an art;
For his lore was engraft, something foreign that grew in him,
Exhausting the sap of the native and true in him,
So that when a man came with a soul that was new in him,
Carving new forms of truth out of Nature's old granite,

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New and old at their birth, like Le Verrier's planet,
Which, to get a true judgment, themselves must create
In the soul of their critic the measure and weight,
Being rather themselves a fresh standard of grace,
To compute their own judge, and assign him his place,
Our reviewer would crawl all about it and round it,
And, reporting each circumstance just as he found it,
Without the least malice, — his record would be
Profoundly æsthetic as that of a flea,
Which, supping on Wordsworth, should print, for our sakes,
Recollections of nights with the Bard of the Lakes,
Or, lodged by an Arab guide, ventured to render a
Comprehensive account of the ruins at Denderah.

As I said, he was never precisely unkind,
The defect in his brain was just absence of mind;
If he boasted, 't was simply that he was self-made,
A position which I, for one, never gainsaid,
My respect for my Maker supposing a skill
In His works which our Hero would answer but ill;
And I trust that the mould which he used may be cracked, or he,
Made bold by success, may enlarge his phylactery,
And set up a kind of a man-manufactory, —
An event which I shudder to think about, seeing
That Man is a moral, accountable being.

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He meant well enough, but was still in the way,
As dunces still are, let them be where they may;
Indeed, they appear to come into existence
To impede other folks with their awkward assistance;
If you set up a dunce on the very North pole
All alone with himself, I believe, on my soul,
He 'd manage to get betwixt somebody's shins,
And pitch him down bodily, all in his sins,
To the grave polar bears sitting round on the ice,
All shortening their grace, to be in for a slice;
Or, if he found nobody else there to pother,
Why, one of his legs would just trip up the other,
For there 's nothing we read of in torture's inventions,
Like a well-meaning dunce, with the best of intentions.

A terrible fellow to meet in society,
Not the toast that he buttered was ever so dry at tea;
There he 'd sit at the table and stir in his sugar,
Crouching close for a spring, all the while, like a cougar;
Be sure of your facts, of your measures and weights,
Of your time, — he 's as fond as an Arab of dates;
You 'll be telling, perhaps, in your comical way,
Of something you 've seen in the course of the day;
And, just as you 're tapering out the conclusion,
You venture an ill-fated classic allusion, —
The girls have all got their laughs ready, when, whack!

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The cougar comes down on your thunderstruck back!
You had left out a comma, — your Greek 's put in joint,
And pointed at cost of your story's whole point.
In the course of the evening, you find chance for certain
Soft speeches to Anne, in the shade of the curtain:
You tell her your heart can be likened to *one* flower,
"And that, O most charming of women 's the sunflower,
Which turns" — here a clear nasal voice, to your terror,
From outside the curtain, says, "That 's all an error."
As for him, he 's — no matter, he never grew tender,
Sitting after a ball, with his feet on the fender,
Shaping somebody's sweet features out of cigar smoke
(Though he 'd willingly grant you that such doings are smoke);
All women he damns with *mutabile semper*,
And if ever he felt something like love's distemper,
'T was tow'rds a young lady who spoke ancient Mexican,
And assisted her father in making a lexicon;
Though I recollect hearing him get quite ferocious
About Mary Clausum, the mistress of Grotius,
Or something of that sort, — but, no more to bore ye
With character-painting, I 'll turn to my story.

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Now, Apollo, who finds it convenient sometimes
To get his court clear of the makers of rhymes,
The *genus*, I think it is called, *irritabile*,
Every one of whom thinks himself treated most shabbily,
And nurses a — what is it? — *immedicabile*,
Which keeps him at boiling-point, hot for a quarrel,
As bitter as wormwood, and sourer than sorrel,
If any poor devil but look at a laurel; —
Apollo, I say, being sick of their rioting
(Though he sometimes acknowledged their verse had a quieting
Effect after dinner, and seemed to suggest a
Retreat to the shrine of a tranquil siesta),
Kept our Hero at hand, who, by means of a bray,
Which he gave to the life, drove the rabble away;
And if that would n't do, he was sure to succeed,
If he took his review out and offered to read;
Or, failing in plans of this milder description,
He would ask for their aid to get up a subscription,
Considering that authorship was n't a rich craft,
To print the "American drama of Witchcraft."
"Stay, I 'll read you a scene," — but he hardly began,
Ere Apollo shrieked "Help!" and the authors all ran:
And once, when these purgatives acted with less spirit,
And the desperate case asked a remedy desperate,
He drew from his pocket a foolscap epistle
As calmly as if 't were a nine-barrelled pistol,

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And threatened them all with the judgment to come,
Of "A wandering Star's first impressions of Rome."
"Stop! stop!" with their hands o'er their ears, screamed the Muses,
"He may go off and murder himself, if he chooses,
'T was a means self-defence only sanctioned his trying,
'T is mere massacre now that the enemy 's flying;
If he 's forced to 't again, and we happen to be there,
Give us each a large handkerchief soaked in strong ether."

I called this a "Fable for Critics"; you think it 's
More like a display of my rhythmical trinkets;
My plot, like an icicle, 's slender and slippery,
Every moment more slender, and likely to slip awry,
And the reader unwilling *in loco desipere*,
Is free to jump over as much of my frippery
As he fancies, and, if he 's a provident skipper, he
May have like Odysseus control of the gales,
And get safe to port, ere his patience quite fails;
Moreover, although 't is a slender return
For your toil and expense, yet my paper will burn,
And, if you have manfully struggled thus far with me,
You may e'en twist me up, and just light your cigar with me:
If too angry for that, you can tear me in pieces,

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And my *membra disjecta* consign to the breezes,
A fate like great Ratzau's, whom one of those bores,
Who beflead with bad verses poor Louis Quatorze,
Describes (the first verse somehow ends with *victoire*),
As *dispersant partout et ses membres et sa gloire;*
Or, if I were over-desirous of earning
A repute among noodles for classical learning,
I could pick you a score of allusions, i-wis,
As new as the jests of *Didaskalos tis;*
Better still, I could make out a good solid list
From authors recondite who do not exist, —
But that would be naughty: at least, I could twist
Something out of Absyrtus, or turn your inquiries
After Milton's prose metaphor, drawn from Osiris;
But, as Cicero says he won't say this or that
(A fetch, I must say, most transparent and flat),
After saying whate'er he could possibly think of, —
I simply will state that I pause on the brink of
A mire, ankle-deep, of deliberate confusion,
Made up of old jumbles of classic allusion:
So, when you were thinking yourselves to be pitied,
Just conceive how much harder your teeth you 'd have gritted,
An 't were not for the dulness I 've kindly omitted.

I 'd apologize here for my many digressions,
Were it not that I 'm certain to trip into fresh ones
('T is so hard to escape if you get in their mesh once);

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Just reflect, if you please, how 't is said by Horatius,
That Mæonides nods now and then, and, my gracious!
It certainly does look a little bit ominous
When he gets under way with *ton d' apameibomenos.*
(Here a something occurs which I 'll just clap a rhyme to,
And say it myself, ere a Zoilus have time to, —
Any author a nap like Van Winkle's may take,
If he only contrive to keep readers awake,
But he 'll very soon find himself laid on the shelf,
If *they* fall a-nodding when he nods himself.)

Once for all, to return, and to stay, will I, nill I —
When Phœbus expressed his desire for a lily,
Our Hero, whose homœopathic sagacity
With an ocean of zeal mixed his drop of capacity,
Set off for the garden as fast as the wind
(Or, to take a comparison more to my mind,
As a sound politician leaves conscience behind),
And leaped the low fence, as a party hack jumps
O'er his principles, when something else turns up trumps.

He was gone a long time, and Apollo, meanwhile,
Went over some sonnets of his with a file,
For, of all compositions, he thought that the sonnet
Best repaid all the toil you expended upon it;

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It should reach with one impulse the end of its course,
And for one final blow collect all of its force;
Not a verse should be salient, but each one should tend
With a wave-like up-gathering to break at the end;
So, condensing the strength here, there smoothing a wry kink,
He was killing the time, when up walked Mr. D——;
At a few steps behind him, a small man in glasses
Went dodging about, muttering, "Murderers! asses!"
From out of his pocket a paper he 'd take,
With a proud look of martyrdom tied to its stake,
And, reading a squib at himself, he 'd say, "Here I see
'Gainst American letters a bloody conspiracy,
They are all by my personal enemies written;
I must post an anonymous letter to Britain,
And show that this gall is the merest suggestion
Of spite at my zeal on the Copyright question,
For, on this side the water, 't is prudent to pull
O'er the eyes of the public their national wool,
By accusing of slavish respect to John Bull
All American authors who have more or less
Of that anti-American humbug — success,
While in private we 're always embracing the knees
Of some twopenny editor over the seas,
And licking his critical shoes, for you know 't is
The whole aim of our lives to get one English notice;

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My American puffs I would willingly burn all
(They 're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal)
To get but a kick from a transmarine journal!"

So, culling the gibes of each critical scorner
As if they were plums, and himself were Jack Horner,
He came cautiously on, peeping round every corner,
And into each hole where a weasel might pass in,
Expecting the knife of some critic assassin,
Who stabs to the heart with a caricature,
Not so bad as those daubs of the Sun, to be sure,
Yet done with a dagger-o'-type, whose vile portraits
Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits.

Apollo looked up, hearing footsteps approaching,
And slipped out of sight the new rhymes he was broaching, —
"Good day, Mr. D——, I 'm happy to meet,
With a scholar so ripe, and a critic so neat,
Who through Grub Street the soul of a gentleman carries;
What news from that suburb of London and Paris
Which latterly makes such shrill claims to monopolize
The credit of being the New World's metropolis?"

"Why, nothing of consequence, save this attack
On my friend there, behind, by some pitiful hack,
Who thinks every national author a poor one,

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That is n't a copy of something that 's foreign,
And assaults the American Dick — "

"Nay, 't is clear
That your Damon there 's fond of a flea in his ear,
And, if no one else furnished them gratis, on tick
He would buy some himself, just to hear the old click;
Why, I honestly think, if some fool in Japan
Should turn up his nose at the 'Poems on Man,'
(Which contain many verses as fine, by the bye,
As any that lately came under my eye,)
Your friend there by some inward instinct would know it,
Would get it translated, reprinted, and show it;
As a man might take off a high stock to exhibit
The autograph round his own neck of the gibbet;
Nor would let it rest so, but fire column after column,
Signed Cato, or Brutus, or something as solemn,
By way of displaying his critical crosses,
And tweaking that poor transatlantic proboscis,
His broadsides resulting (this last there 's no doubt of)
In successively sinking the craft they 're fired out of.
Now nobody knows when an author is hit,
If he have not a public hysterical fit;
Let him only keep close in his snug garret's dim ether,
And nobody 'd think of his foes — or of him either;

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If an author have any least fibre of worth in him,
Abuse would but tickle the organ of mirth in him;
All the critics on earth cannot crush with their ban
One word that 's in tune with the nature of man."

"Well, perhaps so; meanwhile I have brought you a book,
Into which if you 'll just have the goodness to look,
You may feel so delighted (when once you are through it)
As to deem it not unworth your while to review it,
And I think I can promise your thoughts, if you do,
A place in the next Democratic Review."

"The most thankless of gods you must surely have thought me,
For this is the forty-fourth copy you 've brought me,
I have given them away, or at least I have tried,
But I 've forty-two left, standing all side by side
(The man who accepted that one copy died), —
From one end of a shelf to the other they reach,
'With the author's respects' neatly written in each.
The publisher, sure, will proclaim a Te Deum,
When he hears of that order the British Museum
Has sent for one set of what books were first printed
In America, little or big, — for 't is hinted
That this is the first truly tangible hope he
Has ever had raised for the sale of a copy.

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I 've thought very often 't would be a good thing
In all public collections of books, if a wing
Were set off by itself, like the seas from the dry lands,
Marked *Literature suited to desolate islands*,
And filled with such books as could never be read
Save by readers of proofs, forced to do it for bread, —
Such books as one 's wrecked on in small country taverns,
Such as hermits might mortify over in caverns,
Such as Satan, if printing had then been invented,
As the climax of woe, would to Job have presented,
Such as Crusoe might dip in, although there are few so
Outrageously cornered by fate as poor Crusoe;
And since the philanthropists just now are banging
And gibbeting all who 're in favor of hanging
(Though Cheever has proved that the Bible and Altar
Were let down from Heaven at the end of a halter,
And that vital religion would dull and grow callous,
Unrefreshed, now and then, with a sniff of the gallows), —
And folks are beginning to think it looks odd,
To choke a poor scamp for the glory of God;
And that He who esteems the Virginia reel
A bait to draw saints from their spiritual weal,
And regards the quadrille as a far greater knavery

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Than crushing His African children with slavery, —
Since all who take part in a waltz or cotillon
Are mounted for hell on the Devil's own pillion,
Who, as every true orthodox Christian well knows,
Approaches the heart through the door of the toes, —
That He, I was saying, whose judgments are stored
For such as take steps in despite of His word,
Should look with delight on the agonized prancing
Of a wretch who has not the least ground for his dancing,
While the State, standing by, sings a verse from the Psalter
About offering to God on His favorite halter,
And, when the legs droop from their twitching divergence,
Sells the clothes to a Jew, and the corpse to the surgeons; —
Now, instead of all this, I think I can direct you all
To a criminal code both humane and effectual; —
I propose to shut up every doer of wrong
With these desperate books, for such term, short or long,
As by statute in such cases made and provided,
Shall be by your wise legislators decided:
Thus: Let murderers be shut, to grow wiser and cooler,
At hard labor for life on the works of Miss ——;
Petty thieves, kept from flagranter crimes by their fears,
Shall peruse Yankee Doodle a blank term of years, —

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That American Punch, like the English, no doubt, —
Just the sugar and lemons and spirit left out.

"But stay, here comes Tityrus Griswold, and leads on
The flocks whom he first plucks alive, and then feeds on, —
A loud-cackling swarm, in whose feathers warm-drest,
He goes for as perfect a — swan as the rest.

"There comes Emerson first, whose rich words, every one,
Are like gold nails in temples to hang trophies on,
Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the Lord knows,
Is some of it pr— No, 't is not even prose;
I 'm speaking of metres; some poems have welled
From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er been excelled;
They 're not epics, but that does n't matter a pin,
In creating, the only hard thing 's to begin;
A grass-blade 's no easier to make than an oak;
If you 've once found the way, you 've achieved the grand stroke;
In the worst of his poems are mines of rich matter,
But thrown in a heap with a crash and a clatter;
Now it is not one thing nor another alone
Makes a poem, but rather the general tone,
The something pervading, uniting the whole,
The before unconceived, unconceivable soul,

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So that just in removing this trifle or that, you
Take away, as it were, a chief limb of the statue;
Roots, wood, bark, and leaves singly perfect may be,
But, clapt hodge-podge together, they don't make a tree.

"But, to come back to Emerson (whom, by the way,
I believe we left waiting), — his is, we may say,
A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders, whose range
Has Olympus for one pole, for t' other the Exchange;
He seems, to my thinking (although I 'm afraid
The comparison must, long ere this, have been made),
A Plotinus-Montaigne, where the Egyptian's gold mist
And the Gascon's shrewd wit cheek-by-jowl coexist;
All admire, and yet scarcely six converts he 's got
To I don't (nor they either) exactly know what;
For though he builds glorious temples, 't is odd
He leaves never a doorway to get in a god.
'T is refreshing to old-fashioned people like me
To meet such a primitive Pagan as he,
In whose mind all creation is duly respected
As parts of himself — just a little projected;
And who 's willing to worship the stars and the sun,
A convert to — nothing but Emerson.
So perfect a balance there is in his head,

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That he talks of things sometimes as if they were dead;
Life, nature, love, God, and affairs of that sort,
He looks at as merely ideas; in short,
As if they were fossils stuck round in a cabinet,
Of such vast extent that our earth's a mere dab in it;
Composed just as he is inclined to conjecture her,
Namely, one part pure earth, ninety-nine parts pure lecturer;
You are filled with delight at his clear demonstration,
Each figure, word, gesture, just fits the occasion,
With the quiet precision of science he 'll sort 'em,
But you can't help suspecting the whole a *post mortem*.

"There are persons, mole-blind to the soul's make and style,
Who insist on a likeness 'twixt him and Carlyle;
To compare him with Plato would be vastly fairer,
Carlyle 's the more burly, but E. is the rarer;
He sees fewer objects, but clearlier, truelier,
If C. 's as original, E. 's more peculiar;
That he 's more of a man you might say of the one,
Of the other he 's more of an Emerson;
C. 's the Titan, as shaggy of mind as of limb, —
E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim;
The one 's two thirds Norseman, the other half Greek,
Where the one 's most abounding, the other 's to seek;

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C.'s generals require to be seen in the mass, —
E.'s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;
C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues,
And rims common-sense things with mystical hues, —
E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,
And looks coolly around him with sharp common-sense;
C. shows you how every-day matters unite
With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night, —
While E., in a plain, preternatural way,
Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;
C. draws all his characters quite *à la* Fuseli, —
Not sketching their bundles of muscles and thews illy,
He paints with a brush so untamed and profuse,
They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and thews;
E. is rather like Flaxman, lines strait and severe,
And a colorless outline, but full, round, and clear; —
To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords
The design of a white marble statue in words.
C. labors to get at the centre, and then
Take a reckoning from there of his actions and men;
E. calmly assumes the said centre as granted,
And, given himself, has whatever is wanted.

"He has imitators in scores, who omit
No part of the man but his wisdom and wit, —
Who go carefully o'er the sky-blue of his brain,

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And when he has skimmed it once, skim it again;
If at all they resemble him, you may be sure it is
Because their shoals mirror his mists and obscurities,
As a mud-puddle seems deep as heaven for a minute,
While a cloud that floats o'er is reflected within it.

"There comes ——, for instance; to see him 's rare sport,
Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short;
How he jumps, how he strains, and gets red in the face,
To keep step with the mystagogue's natural pace!
He follows as close as a stick to a rocket,
His fingers exploring the prophet's each pocket.
Fie, for shame, brother bard; with good fruit of your own,
Can't you let Neighbor Emerson's orchards alone?
Besides, 't is no use, you 'll not find e'en a core, —
—— has picked up all the windfalls before.
They might strip every tree, and E. never would catch 'em,
His Hesperides have no rude dragon to watch 'em;
When they send him a dishful, and ask him to try 'em,
He never suspects how the sly rogues came by 'em;
He wonders why 't is there are none such his trees on,
And thinks 'em the best he has tasted this season.

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"Yonder, calm as a cloud, Alcott stalks in a dream,
And fancies himself in thy groves, Academe,
With the Parthenon nigh, and the olive-trees o'er him,
And never a fact to perplex him or bore him,
With a snug room at Plato's when night comes, to walk to,
And people from morning till midnight to talk to,
And from midnight till morning, nor snore in their listening; —
So he muses, his face with the joy of it glistening,
For his highest conceit of a happiest state is
Where they 'd live upon acorns, and hear him talk gratis;
And indeed, I believe, no man ever talked better, —
Each sentence hangs perfectly poised to a letter;
He seems piling words, but there 's royal dust hid
In the heart of each sky-piercing pyramid.
While he talks he is great, but goes out like a taper,
If you shut him up closely with pen, ink, and paper;
Yet his fingers itch for 'em from morning till night,
And he thinks he does wrong if he don't always write;
In this, as in all things, a lamb among men,
He goes to sure death when he goes to his pen.

"Close behind him is Brownson, his mouth very full

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With attempting to gulp a Gregorian bull;
Who contrives, spite of that, to pour out as he goes
A stream of transparent and forcible prose;
He shifts quite about, then proceeds to expound
That 't is merely the earth, not himself, that turns round,
And wishes it clearly impressed on your mind
That the weathercock rules and not follows the wind;
Proving first, then as deftly confuting each side,
With no doctrine pleased that 's not somewhere denied,
He lays the denier away on the shelf,
And then — down beside him lies gravely himself.
He 's the Salt River boatman, who always stands willing
To convey friend or foe without charging a shilling,
And so fond of the trip that, when leisure 's to spare,
He 'll row himself up, if he can't get a fare.
The worst of it is, that his logic 's so strong,
That of two sides he commonly chooses the wrong;
If there *is* only one, why, he 'll split it in two,
And first pummel this half, then that, black and blue.
That white 's white needs no proof, but it takes a deep fellow
To prove it jet-black, and that jet-black is yellow.
He offers the true faith to drink in a sieve, —
When it reaches your lips there 's naught left to believe

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But a few silly- (syllo-, I mean,) -gisms that squat 'em
Like tadpoles, o'erjoyed with the mud at the bottom.

"There is Willis, all *natty* and jaunty and gay,
Who says his best things in so foppish a way,
With conceits and pet phrases so thickly o'erlaying 'em,
That one hardly knows whether to thank him for saying 'em;
Over-ornament ruins both poem and prose,
Just conceive of a Muse with a ring in her nose!
His prose had a natural grace of its own,
And enough of it, too, if he 'd let it alone;
But he twitches and jerks so, one fairly gets tired,
And is forced to forgive where one might have admired;
Yet whenever it slips away free and unlaced,
It runs like a stream with a musical waste,
And gurgles along with the liquidest sweep; —
'T is not deep as a river, but who 'd have it deep?
In a country where scarcely a village is found
That has not its author sublime and profound,
For some one to be slightly shallow 's a duty,
And Willis's shallowness makes half his beauty.
His prose winds along with a blithe, gurgling error,
And reflects all of Heaven it can see in its mirror:
'T is a narrowish strip, but it is not an artifice;
'T is the true out-of-doors with its genuine hearty phiz;
It is Nature herself, and there 's something in that,

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Since most brains reflect but the crown of a hat.
Few volumes I know to read under a tree,
More truly delightful than his A l'Abri,
With the shadows of leaves flowing over your book,
Like ripple-shades netting the bed of a brook;
With June coming softly your shoulder to look over,
Breezes waiting to turn every leaf of your book over,
And Nature to criticise still as you read, —
The page that bears that is a rare one indeed.

"He 's so innate a cockney, that had he been born
Where plain bare-skin 's the only full-dress that is worn,
He 'd have given his own such an air that you 'd say
'T had been made by a tailor to lounge in Broadway.
His nature 's a glass of champagne with the foam on 't,
As tender as Fletcher, as witty as Beaumont;
So his best things are done in the flush of the moment;
If he wait, all is spoiled; he may stir it and shake it,
But, the fixed air once gone, he can never remake it.
He might be a marvel of easy delightfulness,
If he would not sometimes leave the *r* out of sprightfulness;

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And he ought to let Scripture alone — 't is self-slaughter,
For nobody likes inspiration-and-water.
He 'd have been just the fellow to sup at the Mermaid,
Cracking jokes at rare Ben, with an eye to the barmaid,
His wit running up as Canary ran down, —
The topmost bright bubble on the wave of The Town.

"Here comes Parker, the Orson of parsons, a man
Whom the Church undertook to put under her ban
(The Church of Socinus, I mean), — his opinions
Being So- (ultra) -cinian, they shocked the Socinians;
They believed — faith, I 'm puzzled — I think I may call
Their belief a believing in nothing at all,
Or something of that sort; I know they all went
For a general union of total dissent:
He went a step farther; without cough or hem,
He frankly avowed he believed not in them;
And, before he could be jumbled up or prevented,
From their orthodox kind of dissent he dissented.
There was heresy here, you perceive, for the right
Of privately judging means simply that light
Has been granted to *me*, for deciding on *you*;
And in happier times, before Atheism grew,
The deed contained clauses for cooking you too:

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Now at Xerxes and Knut we all laugh, yet our foot
With the same wave is wet that mocked Xerxes and Knut,
And we all entertain a secure private notion,
That our *Thus far!* will have a great weight with the ocean.
'T was so with our liberal Christians: they bore
With sincerest conviction their chairs to the shore;
They brandished their worn theological birches,
Bade natural progress keep out of the Churches,
And expected the lines they had drawn to prevail
With the fast-rising tide to keep out of their pale;
They had formerly dammed the Pontifical See,
And the same thing, they thought, would do nicely for P.;
But he turned up his nose at their mumming and shamming,
And cared (shall I say?) not a d—— for their damming;
So they first read him out of their church, and next minute
Turned round and declared he had never been in it.
But the ban was too small or the man was too big,
For he recks not their bells, books, and candles a fig
(He scarce looks like a man who would *stay* treated shabbily,
Sophroniscus' son's head o'er the features of Rabelais);—
He bangs and bethwacks them,—their backs he salutes

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With the whole tree of knowledge torn up by the roots;
His sermons with satire are plenteously verjuiced,
And he talks in one breath of Confutzee, Cass, Zerduscht,
Jack Robinson, Peter the Hermit, Strap, Dathan,
Cush, Pitt (not the bottomless, *that* he 's no faith in),
Pan, Pillicock, Shakespeare, Paul, Toots, Monsieur Tonson,
Aldebaran, Alcander, Ben Khorat, Ben Jonson,
Thoth, Richter, Joe Smith, Father Paul, Judah Monis,
Musæus, Muretus, *hem*, — μ Scorpionis,
Maccabee, Maccaboy, Mac — Mac — ah! Machiavelli,
Condorcet, Count d'Orsay, Conder, Say, Ganganelli,
Orion, O'Connell, the Chevalier D'O,
(See the Memoirs of Sully,) το παν, the great toe
Of the statue of Jupiter, now made to pass
For that of Jew Peter by good Romish brass,
(You may add for yourselves, for I find it a bore,
All the names you have ever, or not, heard before,
And when you 've done that — why, invent a few more.)
His hearers can't tell you on Sunday beforehand,
If in that day's discourse they 'll be Bibled or Koraned,
For he 's seized the idea (by his martyrdom fired)
That all men (not orthodox) *may be* inspired;

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Yet though wisdom profane with his creed he may
weave in,
He makes it quite clear what he *does n't* believe in,
While some, who decry him, think all Kingdom
Come
Is a sort of a, kind of a, species of Hum,
Of which, as it were, so to speak, not a crumb
Would be left, if we did n't keep carefully mum,
And, to make a clean breast, that 't is perfectly
plain
That *all* kinds of wisdom are somewhat profane;
Now P.'s creed than this may be lighter or darker,
But in one thing, 't is clear, he has faith, namely —
Parker;
And this is what makes him the crowd-drawing
preacher,
There 's a background of god to each hard-working
feature,
Every word that he speaks has been fierily fur-
naced
In the blast of a life that has struggled in earnest:
There he stands, looking more like a ploughman
than priest,
If not dreadfully awkward, not graceful at least,
His gestures all downright and same, if you will,
As of brown-fisted Hobnail in hoeing a drill;
But his periods fall on you, stroke after stroke,
Like the blows of a lumberer felling an oak,
You forget the man wholly, you 're thankful to
meet
With a preacher who smacks of the field and the
street,

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And to hear, you 're not over-particular whence,
Almost Taylor's profusion, quite Latimer's sense.

"There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as dignified,
As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignified,
Save when by reflection 't is kindled o' nights
With a semblance of flame by the chill Northern Lights.
He may rank (Griswold says so) first bard of your nation
(There 's no doubt that he stands in supreme iceolation),
Your topmost Parnassus he may set his heel on,
But no warm applauses come, peal following peal on, —
He 's too smooth and too polished to hang any zeal on:
Unqualified merits, I 'll grant, if you choose, he has 'em,
But he lacks the one merit of kindling enthusiasm;
If he stir you at all, it is just, on my soul,
Like being stirred up with the very North Pole.

"He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter Nos*, we don't want *extra* freezing in winter;
Take him up in the depth of July, my advice is,
When you feel an Egyptian devotion to ices.
But, deduct all you can, there 's enough that 's right good in him,
He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in him;

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And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or where'er it is,
Glows, softens, and thrills with the tenderest charities —
To you mortals that delve in this trade-ridden planet?
No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone and granite.
If you 're one who *in loco* (add *foco* here) *desipis*,
You will get of his outermost heart (as I guess) a piece;
But you 'd get deeper down if you came as a precipice,
And would break the last seal of its inwardest fountain,
If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain.
Mr. Quivis, or somebody quite as discerning,
Some scholar who 's hourly expecting his learning,
Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but Wordsworth
May be rated at more than your whole tuneful herd 's worth.
No, don't be absurd, he 's an excellent Bryant;
But, my friends, you 'll endanger the life of your client,
By attempting to stretch him up into a giant:
If you choose to compare him, I think there are two per-
-sons fit for a parallel — Thompson and Cowper;[1]

[1] To demonstrate quickly and easily how per-
-versely absurd 't is to sound this name *Cowper*,
As people in general call him named *super*,
I remark that he rhymes it himself with horse-trooper.

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I don't mean exactly, — there 's something of each,
There 's T.'s love of nature, C.'s penchant to preach;
Just mix up their minds so that C.'s spice of craziness
Shall balance and neutralize T.'s turn for laziness,
And it gives you a brain cool, quite frictionless, quiet,
Whose internal police nips the buds of all riot, —
A brain like a permanent strait-jacket put on
The heart that strives vainly to burst off a button, —
A brain which, without being slow or mechanic,
Does more than a larger less drilled, more volcanic;
He 's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness bitten,
And the advantage that Wordsworth before him had written.

"But, my dear little bardlings, don't prick up your ears
Nor suppose I would rank you and Bryant as peers;
If I call him an iceberg, I don't mean to say
There is nothing in that which is grand in its way;
He is almost the one of your poets that knows
How much grace, strength, and dignity lie in Repose;
If he sometimes fall short, he is too wise to mar
His thought's modest fulness by going too far;
'T would be well if your authors should all make a trial
Of what virtue there is in severe self-denial,

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And measure their writings by Hesiod's staff,
Which teaches that all has less value than half.

"There is Whittier, whose swelling and vehement heart
Strains the strait-breasted drab of the Quaker apart,
And reveals the live Man, still supreme and erect,
Underneath the bemummying wrappers of sect;
There was ne'er a man born who had more of the swing
Of the true lyric bard and all that kind of thing;
And his failures arise (though he seem not to know it)
From the very same cause that has made him a poet, —
A fervor of mind which knows no separation
'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration,
As my Pythoness erst sometimes erred from not knowing
If 't were I or mere wind through her tripod was blowing;
Let his mind once get head in its favorite direction
And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection,
While, borne with the rush of the metre along,
The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,
Content with the whirl and delirium of song;
Then his grammar 's not always correct, nor his rhymes,
And he 's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes,

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Not his best, though, for those are struck off at white-heats
When the heart in his breast like a trip-hammer beats,
And can ne'er be repeated again any more
Than they could have been carefully plotted before:
Like old what 's-his-name there at the battle of Hastings
(Who, however, gave more than mere rhythmical bastings),
Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights
For reform and whatever they call human rights,
Both singing and striking in front of the war,
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor;
Anne haec, one exclaims, on beholding his knocks,
Vestis filii tui, O leather-clad Fox?
Can that be thy son, in the battle's mid din,
Preaching brotherly love and then driving it in
To the brain of the tough old Goliath of sin,
With the smoothest of pebbles from Castaly's spring
Impressed on his hard moral sense with a sling?

"All honor and praise to the right-hearted bard
Who was true to The Voice when such service was hard,
Who himself was so free he dared sing for the slave
When to look but a protest in silence was brave;
All honor and praise to the women and men

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Who spoke out for the dumb and the down-trodden
then!
It needs not to name them, already for each
I see History preparing the statue and niche;
They were harsh, but shall *you* be so shocked at
hard words
Who have beaten your pruning-hooks up into
swords,
Whose rewards and hurrahs men are surer to
gain
By the reaping of men and of women than grain?
Why should *you* stand aghast at their fierce wordy
war, if
You scalp one another for Bank or for Tariff?
Your calling them cut-throats and knaves all day
long
Does n't prove that the use of hard language is
wrong;
While the World's heart beats quicker to think of
such men
As signed Tyranny's doom with a bloody steel-pen,
While on Fourth-of-Julys beardless orators fright
one
With hints at Harmodius and Aristogeiton,
You need not look shy at your sisters and brothers
Who stab with sharp words for the freedom of
others; —
No, a wreath, twine a wreath for the loyal and true
Who, for sake of the many, dared stand with the
few,
Not of blood-spattered laurel for enemies braved,
But of broad, peaceful oak-leaves for citizens saved!

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"Here comes Dana, abstractedly loitering along,
Involved in a paulo-post-future of song,
Who 'll be going to write what 'll never be written
Till the Muse, ere he think of it, gives him the mitten, —
Who is so well aware of how things should be done,
That his own works displease him before they 're begun, —
Who so well all that makes up good poetry knows,
That the best of his poems is written in prose;
All saddled and bridled stood Pegasus waiting,
He was booted and spurred, but he loitered debating;
In a very grave question his soul was immersed, —
Which foot in the stirrup he ought to put first;
And, while this point and that he judicially dwelt on,
He, somehow or other, had written Paul Felton,
Whose beauties or faults, whichsoever you see there,
You 'll allow only genius could hit upon either.
That he once was the Idle Man none will deplore,
But I fear he will never be anything more;
The ocean of song heaves and glitters before him,
The depth and the vastness and longing sweep o'er him,
He knows every breaker and shoal on the chart,
He has the Coast Pilot and so on by heart,
Yet he spends his whole life, like the man in the fable,
In learning to swim on his library-table.

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"There swaggers John Neal, who has wasted in Maine
The sinews and cords of his pugilist brain,
Who might have been poet, but that, in its stead, he
Preferred to believe that he was so already;
Too hasty to wait till Art's ripe fruit should drop,
He must pelt down an unripe and colicky crop;
Who took to the law, and had this sterling plea for it,
It required him to quarrel, and paid him a fee for it;
A man who 's made less than he might have, because
He always has thought himself more than he was, —
Who, with very good natural gifts as a bard,
Broke the strings of his lyre out by striking too hard,
And cracked half the notes of a truly fine voice,
Because song drew less instant attention than noise.
Ah, men do not know how much strength is in poise,
That he goes the farthest who goes far enough,
And that all beyond that is just bother and stuff.
No vain man matures, he makes too much new wood;
His blooms are too thick for the fruit to be good;
'T is the modest man ripens, 't is he that achieves,
Just what 's needed of sunshine and shade he receives;

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Grapes, to mellow, require the cool dark of their leaves;
Neal wants balance; he throws his mind always too far,
Whisking out flocks of comets, but never a star;
He has so much muscle, and loves so to show it,
That he strips himself naked to prove he 's a poet,
And, to show he could leap Art's wide ditch, if he tried,
Jumps clean o'er it, and into the hedge t' other side.
He has strength, but there 's nothing about him in keeping;
One gets surelier onward by walking than leaping;
He has used his own sinews himself to distress,
And had done vastly more had he done vastly less;
In letters, too soon is as bad as too late;
Could he only have waited he might have been great;
But he plumped into Helicon up to the waist,
And muddied the stream ere he took his first taste.

"There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
That you hardly at first see the strength that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so lithe and so fleet,
Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet;
'T is as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the wood,

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Should bloom, after cycles of struggle and scathe,
With a single anemone trembly and rathe;
His strength is so tender, his wildness so meek,
That a suitable parallel sets one to seek, —
He 's a John Bunyan Fouqué, a Puritan Tieck;
When Nature was shaping him, clay was not granted
For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,
So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared,
And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
For making him fully and perfectly man.
The success of her scheme gave her so much delight,
That she tried it again, shortly after, in Dwight;
Only, while she was kneading and shaping the clay,
She sang to her work in her sweet childish way,
And found, when she 'd put the last touch to his soul,
That the music had somehow got mixed with the whole.

"Here 's Cooper, who 's written six volumes to show
He 's as good as a lord: well, let 's grant that he 's so;
If a person prefer that description of praise,
Why, a coronet 's certainly cheaper than bays;
But he need take no pains to convince us he 's not
(As his enemies say) the American Scott.

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Choose any twelve men, and let C. read aloud
That one of his novels of which he's most proud,
And I'd lay any bet that, without ever quitting
Their box, they'd be all, to a man, for acquitting.
He has drawn you one character, though, that is new,
One wildflower he's plucked that is wet with the dew
Of this fresh Western world, and, the thing not to mince,
He has done naught but copy it ill ever since;
His Indians, with proper respect be it said,
Are just Natty Bumppo, daubed over with red,
And his very Long Toms are the same useful Nat,
Rigged up in duck pants and a sou'wester hat
(Though once in a Coffin, a good chance was found
To have slipped the old fellow away underground).
All his other men-figures are clothes upon sticks,
The *dernière chemise* of a man in a fix
(As a captain besieged, when his garrison's small,
Sets up caps upon poles to be seen o'er the wall);
And the women he draws from one model don't vary,
All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie.
When a character 's wanted, he goes to the task
As a cooper would do in composing a cask;
He picks out the staves, of their qualities heedful,
Just hoops them together as tight as is needful,
And, if the best fortune should crown the attempt, he
Has made at the most something wooden and empty.

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"Don't suppose I would underrate Cooper's abilities;
If I thought you 'd do that, I should feel very ill at ease;
The men who have given to *one* character life
And objective existence are not very rife;
You may number them all, both prose-writers and singers,
Without overrunning the bounds of your fingers,
And Natty won't go to oblivion quicker
Than Adams the parson or Primrose the vicar.

"There is one thing in Cooper I like, too, and that is
That on manners he lectures his countrymen gratis;
Not precisely so either, because, for a rarity,
He is paid for his tickets in unpopularity.
Now he may overcharge his American pictures,
But you 'll grant there 's a good deal of truth in his strictures;
And I honor the man who is willing to sink
Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
And, when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,
Will risk t' other half for the freedom to speak,
Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has in store,
Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.

"There are truths you Americans need to be told,
And it never 'll refute them to swagger and scold;

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John Bull, looking o'er the Atlantic, in choler
At your aptness for trade, says you worship the dollar;
But to scorn such eye-dollar-try's what very few do,
And John goes to that church as often as you do.
No matter what John says, don't try to outcrow him,
'T is enough to go quietly on and outgrow him;
Like most fathers, Bull hates to see Number One
Displacing himself in the mind of his son,
And detests the same faults in himself he 'd neglected
When he sees them again in his child's glass reflected;
To love one another you 're too like by half;
If he is a bull, you 're a pretty stout calf,
And tear your own pasture for naught but to show
What a nice pair of horns you 're beginning to grow.

"There are one or two things I should just like to hint,
For you don't often get the truth told you in print;
The most of you (this is what strikes all beholders)
Have a mental and physical stoop in the shoulders;
Though you ought to be free as the winds and the waves,
You 've the gait and the manners of runaway slaves;
Though you brag of your New World, you don't half believe in it;

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And as much of the Old as is possible weave in it;
Your goddess of freedom, a tight, buxom girl,
With lips like a cherry and teeth like a pearl,
With eyes bold as Herë's, and hair floating free,
And full of the sun as the spray of the sea,
Who can sing at a husking or romp at a shearing,
Who can trip through the forests alone without fearing,
Who can drive home the cows with a song through the grass,
Keeps glancing aside into Europe's cracked glass,
Hides her red hands in gloves, pinches up her lithe waist,
And makes herself wretched with transmarine taste;
She loses her fresh country charm when she takes
Any mirror except her own rivers and lakes.

"You steal Englishmen's books and think Englishmen's thought,
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is caught;
Your literature suits its each whisper and motion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean;
The cast clothes of Europe your statesmanship tries
And mumbles again the old blarneys and lies; —
Forget Europe wholly, your veins throb with blood,
To which the dull current in hers is but mud;
Let her sneer, let her say your experiment fails,
In her voice there's a tremble e'en now while she rails,

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And your shore will soon be in the nature of things
Covered thick with gilt drift-wood of castaway kings,
Where alone, as it were in a Longfellow's Waif,
Her fugitive pieces will find themselves safe.
O my friends, thank your god, if you have one, that he
'Twixt the Old World and you set the gulf of a sea;
Be strong-backed, brown-handed, upright as your pines,
By the scale of a hemisphere shape your designs,
Be true to yourselves and this new nineteenth age,
As a statue by Powers, or a picture by Page,
Plough, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all over new,
To your own New-World instincts contrive to be true,
Keep your ears open wide to the Future's first call,
Be whatever you will, but yourselves first of all,
Stand fronting the dawn on Toil's heaven-scaling peaks,
And become my new race of more practical Greeks. —
Hem! your likeness at present, I shudder to tell o't,
Is that you have your slaves, and the Greek had his helot."

Here a gentleman present, who had in his attic
More pepper than brains, shrieked, "The man's a fanatic,

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I 'm a capital tailor with warm tar and feathers,
And will make him a suit that 'll serve in all weathers;
But we 'll argue the point first, I 'm willing to reason 't,
Palaver before condemnation 's but decent;
So, through my humble person, Humanity begs
Of the friends of true freedom a loan of bad eggs."
But Apollo let one such a look of his show forth
As when ἦϊε νύκτι ἐοικώς, and so forth,
And the gentleman somehow slunk out of the way,
But, as he was going, gained courage to say, —
"At slavery in the abstract my whole soul rebels,
I am as strongly opposed to 't as any one else."
"Ay, no doubt, but whenever I 've happened to meet
With a wrong or a crime, it is always concrete,"
Answered Phœbus severely; then turning to us,
"The mistake of such fellows as just made the fuss
Is only in taking a great busy nation
For a part of their pitiful cotton-plantation. —
But there comes Miranda, Zeus! where shall I flee to?
She has such a penchant for bothering me too!
She always keeps asking if I don't observe a
Particular likeness 'twixt her and Minerva;
She tells me my efforts in verse are quite clever; —
She 's been travelling now, and will be worse than ever;
One would think, though, a sharp-sighted noter she 'd be
Of all that 's worth mentioning over the sea,

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For a woman must surely see well, if she try,
The whole of whose being 's a capital I:
She will take an old notion, and make it her own,
By saying it o'er in her Sibylline tone,
Or persuade you 't is something tremendously deep,
By repeating it so as to put you to sleep;
And she well may defy any mortal to see through it,
When once she has mixed up her infinite *me* through it.
There is one thing she owns in her own single right,
It is native and genuine — namely, her spite;
Though, when acting as censor, she privately blows
A censer of vanity 'neath her own nose."

Here Miranda came up, and said, "Phœbus! you know
That the Infinite Soul has its infinite woe,
As I ought to know, having lived cheek by jowl,
Since the day I was born, with the Infinite Soul;
I myself introduced, I myself, I alone,
To my Land's better life authors solely my own,
Who the sad heart of earth on their shoulders have taken,
Whose works sound a depth by Life's quiet unshaken,
Such as Shakespeare, for instance, the Bible, and Bacon,
Not to mention my own works; Time's nadir is fleet,
And, as for myself, I 'm quite out of conceit — "

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"Quite out of conceit! I 'm enchanted to hear it,"
Cried Apollo aside. "Who 'd have thought she was near it?
To be sure, one is apt to exhaust those commodities
One uses too fast, yet in this case as odd it is
As if Neptune should say to his turbots and whitings,
'I 'm as much out of salt as Miranda's own writings'
(Which, as she in her own happy manner has said,
Sound a depth, for 't is one of the functions of lead).
She often has asked me if I could not find
A place somewhere near me that suited her mind;
I know but a single one vacant, which she,
With her rare talent that way, would fit to a T.
And it would not imply any pause or cessation
In the work she esteems her peculiar vocation, —
She may enter on duty to-day, if she chooses,
And remain Tiring-woman for life to the Muses."

Miranda meanwhile has succeeded in driving
Up into a corner, in spite of their striving,
A small flock of terrified victims, and there,
With an I-turn-the-crank-of-the-Universe air
And a tone which, at least to *my* fancy, appears
Not so much to be entering as boxing your ears,
Is unfolding a tale (of herself, I surmise,
For 't is dotted as thick as a peacock's with I's).
Apropos of Miranda, I 'll rest on my oars
And drift through a trifling digression on bores,

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For, though not wearing ear-rings *in more majorum*,
Our ears are kept bored just as if we still wore 'em.
There was one feudal custom worth keeping, at least,
Roasted bores made a part of each well-ordered feast,
And of all quiet pleasures the very *ne plus*
Was in hunting wild bores as the tame ones hunt us.
Archæologians, I know, who have personal fears
Of this wise application of hounds and of spears,
Have tried to make out, with a zeal more than wonted,
'T was a kind of wild swine that our ancestors hunted;
But I 'll never believe that the age which has strewn
Europe o'er with cathedrals, and otherwise shown
That it knew what was what, could by chance not have known
(Spending, too, its chief time with its buff on, no doubt)
Which beast 't would improve the world most to thin out.
I divide bores myself, in the manner of rifles,
Into two great divisions, regardless of trifles; —
There 's your smooth-bore and screw-bore, who do not much vary
In the weight of cold lead they respectively carry.
The smooth-bore is one in whose essence the mind
Not a corner nor cranny to cling by can find;
You feel as in nightmares sometimes, when you slip

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Down a steep slated roof, where there 's nothing to grip;
You slide and you slide, the blank horror increases, —
You had rather by far be at once smashed to pieces;
You fancy a whirlpool below white and frothing,
And finally drop off and light upon — nothing.
The screw-bore has twists in him, faint predilections
For going just wrong in the tritest directions;
When he 's wrong he is flat, when he 's right he can't show it,
He 'll tell you what Snooks said about the new poet,[1]
Or how Fogrum was outraged by Tennyson's Princess;
He has spent all his spare time and intellect since his
Birth in perusing, on each art and science,
Just the books in which no one puts any reliance,
And though *nemo*, we 're told, *horis omnibus sapit*,
The rule will not fit him, however you shape it,
For he has a perennial foison of sappiness;
He has just enough force to spoil half your day's happiness,
And to make him a sort of mosquito to be with,
But just not enough to dispute or agree with.

These sketches I made (not to be too explicit)
From two honest fellows who made me a visit,

[1] (If you call Snooks an owl, he will show by his looks
That he 's morally certain you 're jealous of Snooks.)

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And broke, like the tale of the Bear and the Fiddle,
My reflections on Halleck short off by the middle;
I sha'n't now go into the subject more deeply,
For I notice that some of my readers look sleep'ly;
I will barely remark that, 'mongst civilized nations,
There 's none that displays more exemplary patience
Under all sorts of boring, at all sorts of hours,
From all sorts of desperate persons, than ours.
Not to speak of our papers, our State legislatures,
And other such trials for sensitive natures,
Just look for a moment at Congress, — appalled,
My fancy shrinks back from the phantom it called;
Why, there 's scarcely a member unworthy to frown
'Neath what Fourier nicknames the Boreal crown;
Only think what that infinite bore-pow'r could do
If applied with a utilitarian view;
Suppose, for example, we shipped it with care
To Sahara's great desert and let it bore there;
If they held one short session and did nothing else,
They 'd fill the whole waste with Artesian wells.
But 't is time now with pen phonographic to follow
Through some more of his sketches our laughing Apollo: —

"There comes Harry Franco, and, as he draws near,
You find that 's a smile which you took for a sneer;
One half of him contradicts t' other; his wont
Is to say very sharp things and do very blunt;

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His manner 's as hard as his feelings are tender,
And a *sortie* he 'll make when he means to surrender;
He 's in joke half the time when he seems to be sternest,
When he seems to be joking, be sure he 's in earnest;
He has common sense in a way that 's uncommon,
Hates humbug and cant, loves his friends like a woman,
Builds his dislikes of cards and his friendships of oak,
Loves a prejudice better than aught but a joke,
Is half upright Quaker, half downright Come-outer,
Loves Freedom too well to go stark mad about her,
Quite artless himself, is a lover of Art,
Shuts you out of his secrets and into his heart,
And though not a poet, yet all must admire
In his letters of Pinto his skill on the liar.

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make people of common sense damn metres,
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind,

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Who — But hey-day! What 's this? Messieurs
Mathews and Poe,
You must n't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so,
Does it make a man worse that his character 's
such
As to make his friends love him (as you think) too
much?
Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive
More willing than he that his fellows should
thrive;
While you are abusing him thus, even now
He would help either one of you out of a slough;
You may say that he 's smooth and all that till
you 're hoarse,
But remember that elegance also is force;
After polishing granite as much as you will,
The heart keeps its tough old persistency still;
Deduct all you can, *that* still keeps you at bay;
Why, he 'll live till men weary of Collins and
Gray.
I 'm not over-fond of Greek metres in English,
To me rhyme 's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,
And your modern hexameter verses are no more
Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope is like
Homer;
As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,
So, compared to your moderns, sounds old Melesi-
genes;
I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is
That I 've heard the old blind man recite his own
rhapsodies,
And my ear with that music impregnate may be,

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Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,
Or as one can't bear Strauss when his nature is cloven
To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven;
But, set that aside, and 't is truth that I speak,
Had Theocritus written in English, not Greek,
I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce change a line
In that rare, tender, virgin-like pastoral Evangeline.
That 's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart
Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure Art,
'T is a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and strife
As quiet and chaste as the author's own life.

"There comes Philothea, her face all aglow,
She has just been dividing some poor creature's woe,
And can't tell which pleases her most, to relieve
His want, or his story to hear and believe;
No doubt against many deep griefs she prevails,
For her ear is the refuge of destitute tales;
She knows well that silence is sorrow's best food,
And that talking draws off from the heart its black blood,
So she 'll listen with patience and let you unfold
Your bundle of rags as 't were pure cloth of gold,
Which, indeed, it all turns to as soon as she 's touched it,
And (to borrow a phrase from the nursery) *muched* it;

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She has such a musical taste, she will go
Any distance to hear one who draws a long bow;
She will swallow a wonder by mere might and main,
And thinks it Geometry's fault if she 's fain
To consider things flat, inasmuch as they 're plain;
Facts with her are accomplished, as Frenchmen would say —
They will prove all she wishes them to either way, —
And, as fact lies on this side or that, we must try,
If we 're seeking the truth, to find where it don't lie;
I was telling her once of a marvellous aloe
That for thousands of years had looked spindling and sallow,
And, though nursed by the fruitfullest powers of mud,
Had never vouchsafed e'en so much as a bud,
Till its owner remarked (as a sailor, you know,
Often will in a calm) that it never would blow,
For he wished to exhibit the plant, and designed
That its blowing should help him in raising the wind;
At last it was told him that if he should water
Its roots with the blood of his unmarried daughter
(Who was born, as her mother, a Calvinist, said,
With William Law's serious caul on her head),
It would blow as the obstinate breeze did when by a
Like decree of her father died Iphigenia;
At first he declared he himself would be blowed
Ere his conscience with such a foul crime he would load,

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But the thought, coming oft, grew less dark than before,
And he mused, as each creditor knocked at his door,
If *this* were but done they would dun me no more;
I told Philothea his struggles and doubts,
And how he considered the ins and the outs
Of the visions he had, and the dreadful dyspepsy,
How he went to the seër that lives at Po'keepsie,
How the seër advised him to sleep on it first,
And to read his big volume in case of the worst,
And further advised he should pay him five dollars
For writing Yum, Yum, on his wristbands and collars;
Three years and ten days these dark words he had studied
When the daughter was missed, and the aloe had budded;
I told how he watched it grow large and more large,
And wondered how much for the show he should charge, —
She had listened with utter indifference to this, till
I told how it bloomed, and, discharging its pistil
With an aim the Eumenides dictated, shot
The botanical filicide dead on the spot;
It had blown, but he reaped not his horrible gains,
For it blew with such force as to blow out his brains,
And the crime was blown also, because on the wad,
Which was paper, was writ 'Visitation of God,'

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As well as a thrilling account of the deed
Which the coroner kindly allowed me to read.

"Well, my friend took this story up just, to be sure,
As one might a poor foundling that 's laid at one's door;
She combed it and washed it and clothed it and fed it,
And as if 't were her own child most tenderly bred it,
Laid the scene (of the legend, I mean) far away a-
-mong the green vales underneath Himalaya,
And by artist-like touches, laid on here and there,
Made the whole thing so touching, I frankly declare
I have read it all thrice, and, perhaps I am weak,
But I found every time there were tears on my cheek.

"The pole, science tells us, the magnet controls,
But she is a magnet to emigrant Poles,
And folks with a mission that nobody knows,
Throng thickly about her as bees round a rose;
She can fill up the *carets* in such, make their scope
Converge to some focus of rational hope,
And, with sympathies fresh as the morning, their gall
Can transmute into honey, — but this is not all;
Not only for those she has solace, oh say,
Vice's desperate nursling adrift in Broadway,
Who clingest, with all that is left of thee human,

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To the last slender spar from the wreck of the woman,
Hast thou not found one shore where those tired drooping feet
Could reach firm mother-earth, one full heart on whose beat
The soothed head in silence reposing could hear
The chimes of far childhood throb back on the ear?
Ah, there 's many a beam from the fountain of day
That, to reach us unclouded, must pass, on its way,
Through the soul of a woman, and hers is wide ope
To the influence of Heaven as the blue eyes of Hope;
Yes, a great heart is hers, one that dares to go in
To the prison, the slave-hut, the alleys of sin,
And to bring into each, or to find there, some line
Of the never completely out-trampled divine;
If her heart at high floods swamps her brain now and then,
'T is but richer for that when the tide ebbs agen,
As, after old Nile has subsided, his plain
Overflows with a second broad deluge of grain;
What a wealth would it bring to the narrow and sour
Could they be as a Child but for one little hour!

"What! Irving? thrice welcome, warm heart and fine brain,
You bring back the happiest spirit from Spain,
And the gravest sweet humor, that ever were there
Since Cervantes met death in his gentle despair;
Nay, don't be embarrassed, nor look so beseeching,

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I sha'n't run directly against my own preaching,
And, having just laughed at their Raphaels and Dantes,
Go to setting you up beside matchless Cervantes;
But allow me to speak what I honestly feel, —
To a true poet-heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
Throw in all of Addison, *minus* the chill,
With the whole of that partnership's stock and good-will,
Mix well, and while stirring, hum o'er, as a spell,
The fine *old* English Gentleman, simmer it well,
Sweeten just to your own private liking, then strain,
That only the finest and clearest remain,
Let it stand out of doors till a soul it receives
From the warm lazy sun loitering down through green leaves,
And you 'll find a choice nature, not wholly deserving
A name either English or Yankee, — just Irving.

"There goes, — but *stet nominis umbra*, — his name
You 'll be glad enough, some day or other, to claim,
And will all crowd about him and swear that you knew him
If some English critic should chance to review him.
The old *porcos ante ne projiciatis*
MARGARITAS, for him you have verified gratis;
What matters his name? Why, it may be Sylvester,
Judd, Junior, or Junius, Ulysses, or Nestor,
For aught *I* know or care; 't is enough that I look

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On the author of 'Margaret,' the first Yankee book
With the *soul* of Down East in 't, and things farther East,
As far as the threshold of morning, at least,
Where awaits the fair dawn of the simple and true,
Of the day that comes slowly to make all things new.
'T has a smack of pine woods, of bare field and bleak hill,
Such as only the breed of the Mayflower could till;
The Puritan 's shown in it, tough to the core,
Such as prayed, smiting Agag on red Marston Moor:
With an unwilling humor, half choked by the drouth
In brown hollows about the inhospitable mouth;
With a soul full of poetry, though it has qualms
About finding a happiness out of the Psalms;
Full of tenderness, too, though it shrinks in the dark,
Hamadryad-like, under the coarse, shaggy bark;
That sees visions, knows wrestlings of God with the Will,
And has its own Sinais and thunderings still."

Here, "Forgive me, Apollo," I cried, "while I pour
My heart out to my birthplace: O loved more and more
Dear Baystate, from whose rocky bosom thy sons
Should suck milk, strong-will-giving, brave, such as runs

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In the veins of old Graylock — who is it that dares
Call thee pedler, a soul wrapped in bank-books and shares?
It is false! She 's a Poet! I see, as I write,
Along the far railroad the steam-snake glide white,
The cataract-throb of her mill-hearts I hear,
The swift strokes of trip-hammers weary my ear,
Sledges ring upon anvils, through logs the saw screams,
Blocks swing to their place, beetles drive home the beams: —
It is songs such as these that she croons to the din
Of her fast-flying shuttles, year out and year in,
While from earth's farthest corner there comes not a breeze
But wafts her the buzz of her gold-gleaning bees:
What though those horn hands have as yet found small time
For painting and sculpture and music and rhyme?
These will come in due order; the need that pressed sorest
Was to vanquish the seasons, the ocean, the forest,
To bridle and harness the rivers, the steam,
Making those whirl her mill-wheels, this tug in her team,
To vassalize old tyrant Winter, and make
Him delve surlily for her on river and lake; —
When this New World was parted, she strove not to shirk
Her lot in the heirdom, the tough, silent Work,
The hero-share ever, from Herakles down
To Odin, the Earth's iron sceptre and crown:

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Yes, thou dear, noble Mother! if ever men's praise
Could be claimed for creating heroical lays,
Thou hast won it; if ever the laurel divine
Crowned the Maker and Builder, that glory is thine!
Thy songs are right epic, they tell how this rude
Rock-rib of our earth here was tamed and subdued;
Thou hast written them plain on the face of the planet
In brave, deathless letters of iron and granite;
Thou hast printed them deep for all time; they are set
From the same runic type-fount and alphabet
With thy stout Berkshire hills and the arms of thy Bay, —
They are staves from the burly old Mayflower lay.
If the drones of the Old World, in querulous ease,
Ask thy Art and thy Letters, point proudly to these,
Or, if they deny these are Letters and Art,
Toil on with the same old invincible heart;
Thou art rearing the pedestal broad-based and grand
Whereon the fair shapes of the Artist shall stand,
And creating, through labors undaunted and long,
The theme for all Sculpture and Painting and Song!

"But my good mother Baystate wants no praise of mine,
She learned from *her* mother a precept divine

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About something that butters no parsnips, her *forte*
In another direction lies, work is her sport
(Though she 'll curtsy and set her cap straight, that she will,
If you talk about Plymouth and red Bunker's hill).
Dear, notable goodwife! by this time of night,
Her hearth is swept neatly, her fire burning bright,
And she sits in a chair (of home plan and make) rocking,
Musing much, all the while, as she darns on a stocking,
Whether turkeys will come pretty high next Thanksgiving,
Whether flour 'll be so dear, for, as sure as she 's living,
She will use rye-and-injun then, whether the pig
By this time ain't got pretty tolerable big,
And whether to sell it outright will be best,
Or to smoke hams and shoulders and salt down the rest, —
At this minute, she 'd swop all my verses, ah, cruel!
For the last patent stove that is saving of fuel;
So I 'll just let Apollo go on, for his phiz
Shows I 've kept him awaiting too long as it is."

"If our friend, there, who seems a reporter, is done
With his burst of emotion, why, *I* will go on,"

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Said Apollo; some smiled, and, indeed, I must own
There was something sarcastic, perhaps, in his tone; —

"There 's Holmes, who is matchless among you for wit;
A Leyden-jar always full-charged, from which flit
The electrical tingles of hit after hit;
In long poems 't is painful sometimes, and invites
A thought of the way the new Telegraph writes,
Which pricks down its little sharp sentences spitefully
As if you got more than you 'd title to rightfully,
And you find yourself hoping its wild father Lightning
Would flame in for a second and give you a fright'ning.
He has perfect sway of what *I* call a sham metre,
But many admire it, the English pentameter,
And Campbell, I think, wrote most commonly worse,
With less nerve, swing, and fire in the same kind of verse,
Nor e'er achieved aught in 't so worthy of praise
As the tribute of Holmes to the grand *Marseillaise.*
You went crazy last year over Bulwer's New Timon; —
Why, if B., to the day of his dying, should rhyme on,

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Heaping verses on verses and tomes upon tomes,
He could ne'er reach the best point and vigor of Holmes.
His are just the fine hands, too, to weave you a lyric
Full of fancy, fun, feeling, or spiced with satiric
In a measure so kindly, you doubt if the toes
That are trodden upon are your own or your foes'.

"There is Lowell, who 's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he 'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he 's old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem.

"There goes Halleck, whose Fanny 's a pseudo Don Juan,
With the wickedness out that gave salt to the true one,
He 's a wit, though, I hear, of the very first order.

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And once made a pun on the words soft Recorder;
More than this, he 's a very great poet, I 'm told,
And has had his works published in crimson and gold,
With something they call 'Illustrations,' to wit,
Like those with which Chapman obscured Holy Writ,[1]
Which are said to illustrate, because, as I view it,
Like *lucus a non*, they precisely don't do it;
Let a man who can write what himself understands
Keep clear, if he can, of designing men's hands,
Who bury the sense, if there 's any worth having,
And then very honestly call it engraving.
But, to quit *badinage*, which there is n't much wit in,
Halleck 's better, I doubt not, than all he has written;
In his verse a clear glimpse you will frequently find,
If not of a great, of a fortunate mind,
Which contrives to be true to its natural loves
In a world of back-offices, ledgers, and stoves.
When his heart breaks away from the brokers and banks,
And kneels in his own private shrine to give thanks,
There 's a genial manliness in him that earns
Our sincerest respect (read, for instance, his 'Burns'),
And we can't but regret (seek excuse where we may)
That so much of a man has been peddled away.

[1] (Cuts rightly called wooden, as all must admit.)

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"But what's that? a mass-meeting? No, there come in lots,
The American Bulwers, Disraelis, and Scotts,
And in short the American everything elses,
Each charging the others with envies and jealousies; —
By the way, 't is a fact that displays what profusions
Of all kinds of greatness bless free institutions,
That while the Old World has produced barely eight
Of such poets as all men agree to call great,
And of other great characters hardly a score
(One might safely say less than that rather than more),
With you every year a whole crop is begotten,
They 're as much of a staple as corn is, or cotton;
Why, there 's scarcely a huddle of log-huts and shanties
That has not brought forth its own Miltons and Dantes;
I myself know ten Byrons, one Coleridge, three Shelleys,
Two Raphaels, six Titians, (I think) one Apelles,
Leonardos and Rubenses plenty as lichens,
One (but that one is plenty) American Dickens,
A whole flock of Lambs, any number of Tennysons, —
In short, if a man has the luck to have any sons,
He may feel pretty certain that one out of twain
Will be some very great person over again.
There is one inconvenience in all this, which lies

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In the fact that by contrast we estimate size,[1]
And, where there are none except Titans, great stature
Is only the normal proceeding of nature.
What puff the strained sails of your praise will you furl at, if
The calmest degree that you know is superlative?
At Rome, all whom Charon took into his wherry must,
As a matter of course, be well *issimus*t and *errimus*t,
A Greek, too, could feel, while in that famous boat he tost,
That his friends would take care he was ιστοst and ωταροst,
And formerly we, as through graveyards we past,
Thought the world went from bad to worst fearfully fast;
Let us glance for a moment, 't is well worth the pains,
And note what an average graveyard contains;
There lie levellers levelled, duns done up themselves,
There are booksellers finally laid on their shelves,
Horizontally there lie upright politicians,
Dose-a-dose with their patients sleep faultless physicians,
There are slave-drivers quietly whipped underground,

[1] That is in most cases we do, but not all,
Past a doubt, there are men who are innately small,
Such as Blank, who, without being 'minished a tittle,
Might stand for a type of the Absolute Little.

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There bookbinders, done up in boards, are fast bound,
There card-players wait till the last trump be played,
There all the choice spirits get finally laid,
There the babe that 's unborn is supplied with a berth,
There men without legs get their six feet of earth,
There lawyers repose, each wrapped up in his case,
There seekers of office are sure of a place,
There defendant and plaintiff get equally cast,
There shoemakers quietly stick to the last,
There brokers at length become silent as stocks,
There stage-drivers sleep without quitting their box,
And so forth and so forth and so forth and so on,
With this kind of stuff one might endlessly go on;
To come to the point, I may safely assert you
Will find in each yard every cardinal virtue;[1]
Each has six truest patriots: four discoverers of ether,
Who never had thought on 't nor mentioned it either;
Ten poets, the greatest who ever wrote rhyme:
Two hundred and forty first men of their time:
One person whose portrait just gave the least hint
Its original had a most horrible squint:
One critic, most (what do they call it?) reflective,
Who never had used the phrase ob- or subjective:
Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred

[1] (And at this just conclusion will surely arrive,
That the goodness of earth is more dead than alive)

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Their sons for the rice-swamps, at so much a head,
And their daughters for — faugh! thirty mothers of Gracchi:
Non-resistants who gave many a spiritual black-eye:
Eight true friends of their kind, one of whom was a jailer:
Four captains almost as astounding as Taylor:
Two dozen of Italy's exiles who shoot us his
Kaisership daily, stern pen-and-ink Brutuses,
Who, in Yankee back-parlors, with crucified smile,[1]
Mount serenely their country's funereal pile:
Ninety-nine Irish heroes, ferocious rebellers
'Gainst the Saxon in cis-marine garrets and cellars,
Who shake their dread fists o'er the sea and all that, —
As long as a copper drops into the hat:
Nine hundred Teutonic republicans stark
From Vaterland's battles just won — in the Park,
Who the happy profession of martyrdom take
Whenever it gives them a chance at a steak:
Sixty-two second Washingtons: two or three Jacksons:
And so many everythings-else that it racks one's
Poor memory too much to continue the list,
Especially now they no longer exist; —
I would merely observe that you 've taken to giving
The puffs that belong to the dead to the living,
And that somehow your trump-of-contemporary-doom's tones
Is tuned after old dedications and tomb-stones."

[1] Not forgetting their tea and their toast, though, the while.

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Here the critic came in and a thistle presented — [1]
From a frown to a smile the god's features relented,
As he stared at his envoy, who, swelling with pride,
To the god's asking look, nothing daunted, replied, —
"You 're surprised, I suppose, I was absent so long,
But your godship respecting the lilies was wrong;
I hunted the garden from one end to t' other,
And got no reward but vexation and bother,
Till, tossed out with weeds in a corner to wither,
This one lily I found and made haste to bring hither."

"Did he think I had given him a book to review?
I ought to have known what the fellow would do,"
Muttered Phœbus aside, "for a thistle will pass
Beyond doubt for the queen of all flowers with an ass;
He has chosen in just the same way as he 'd choose
His specimens out of the books he reviews;
And now, as this offers an excellent text,
I 'll give 'em some brief hints on criticism next."
So, musing a moment, he turned to the crowd,
And, clearing his voice, spoke as follows aloud: —

"My friends, in the happier days of the muse,
We were luckily free from such things as reviews;
Then naught came between with its fog to make clearer

[1] Turn back now to page — goodness only knows what,
And take a fresh hold on the thread of my plot.

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The heart of the poet to that of his hearer;
Then the poet brought heaven to the people, and they
Felt that they, too, were poets in hearing his lay;
Then the poet was prophet, the past in his soul
Precreated the future, both parts of one whole;
Then for him there was nothing too great or too small,
For one natural deity sanctified all;
Then the bard owned no clipper and meter of moods
Save the spirit of silence that hovers and broods
O'er the seas and the mountains, the rivers and woods;
He asked not earth's verdict, forgetting the clods,
His soul soared and sang to an audience of gods;
'T was for them that he measured the thought and the line,
And shaped for their vision the perfect design,
With as glorious a foresight, a balance as true,
As swung out the worlds in the infinite blue;
Then a glory and greatness invested man's heart,
The universal, which now stands estranged and apart,
In the free individual moulded, was Art;
Then the forms of the Artist seemed thrilled with desire
For something as yet unattained, fuller, higher,
As once with her lips, lifted hands, and eyes listening,
And her whole upward soul in her countenance glistening,

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Eurydice stood — like a beacon unfired,
Which, once touched with flame, will leap heav'n-
ward inspired —
And waited with answering kindle to mark
The first gleam of Orpheus that pained the red
Dark.
Then painting, song, sculpture did more than re-
lieve
The need that men feel to create and believe,
And as, in all beauty, who listens with love
Hears these words oft repeated — 'beyond and
above,'
So these seemed to be but the visible sign
Of the grasp of the soul after things more divine;
They were ladders the Artist erected to climb
O'er the narrow horizon of space and of time,
And we see there the footsteps by which men had
gained
To the one rapturous glimpse of the never-attained,
As shepherds could erst sometimes trace in the sod
The last spurning print of a sky-cleaving god.

"But now, on the poet's dis-privacied moods
With *do this* and *do that* the pert critic intrudes;
While he thinks he 's been barely fulfilling his
duty
To interpret 'twixt men and their own sense of
beauty,
And has striven, while others sought honor or pelf,
To make his kind happy as he was himself,
He finds he 's been guilty of horrid offences
In all kinds of moods, numbers, genders, and
tenses;

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He 's been *ob* and *sub*jective, what Kettle calls Pot,
Precisely, at all events, what he ought not,
You have done this, says one judge; *done that*, says another;
You should have done this, grumbles one; *that*, says 't other;
Never mind what he touches, one shrieks out *Taboo!*
And while he is wondering what he shall do,
Since each suggests opposite topics for song,
They all shout together *you 're right!* and *you 're wrong!*

"Nature fits all her children with something to do,
He who would write and can't write can surely review,
Can set up a small booth as critic and sell us his
Petty conceit and his pettier jealousies;
Thus a lawyer's apprentice, just out of his teens,
Will do for the Jeffrey of six magazines;
Having read Johnson's lives of the poets half through,
There 's nothing on earth he 's not competent to;
He reviews with as much nonchalance as he whistles, —
He goes through a book and just picks out the thistles;
It matters not whether he blame or commend,
If he 's bad as a foe, he 's far worse as a friend:
Let an author but write what 's above his poor scope,

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He goes to work gravely and twists up a rope,
And, inviting the world to see punishment done,
Hangs himself up to bleach in the wind and the sun;
'T is delightful to see, when a man comes along
Who has anything in him peculiar and strong,
Every cockboat that swims clear its fierce (pop) gundeck at him,
And make as he passes its ludicrous Peck at him —"

Here Miranda came up and began, "As to that —"
Apollo at once seized his gloves, cane, and hat,
And, seeing the place getting rapidly cleared,
I too snatched my notes and forthwith disappeared.

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THE UNHAPPY LOT OF MR. KNOTT

PART I

SHOWING HOW HE BUILT HIS HOUSE AND HIS WIFE MOVED INTO IT.

My worthy friend, A. Gordon Knott,
From business snug withdrawn,
Was much contented with a lot
That would contain a Tudor cot
'Twixt twelve feet square of garden-plot,
And twelve feet more of lawn.

He had laid business on the shelf
To give his taste expansion,
And, since no man, retired with pelf,
The building mania can shun,
Knott, being middle-aged himself,
Resolved to build (unhappy elf!)
A mediæval mansion.

He called an architect in counsel;
"I want," said he, "a — you know what,
(You are a builder, I am Knott,)
A thing complete from chimney-pot
Down to the very grounsel;
Here 's a half-acre of good land;
Just have it nicely mapped and planned

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And make your workmen drive on;
  Meadow there is, and upland too,
  And I should like a water-view,
D' you think you could contrive one?
  (Perhaps the pump and trough would do,
  If painted a judicious blue?)
  The woodland I 've attended to;"
  [He meant three pines stuck up askew,
Two dead ones and a live one.]
  " A pocket-full of rocks 't would take
To build a house of freestone,
  But then it is not hard to make
What nowadays is *the* stone;
  The cunning painter in a trice
  Your house's outside petrifies,
  And people think it very gneiss
Without inquiring deeper;
  My money never shall be thrown
  Away on such a deal of stone,
When stone of deal is cheaper."

And so the greenest of antiques
  Was reared for Knott to dwell in:
The architect worked hard for weeks
In venting all his private peaks
Upon the roof, whose crop of leaks
  Had satisfied Fluellen;
Whatever anybody had
Out of the common, good or bad,
  Knott had it all worked well in;
A donjon-keep, where clothes might dry,
A porter's lodge that was a sty,

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A campanilë slim and high,
Too small to hang a bell in;
All up and down and here and there,
With Lord-knows-whats of round and square
Stuck on at random everywhere, —
It was a house to make one stare,
All corners and all gables;
Like dogs let loose upon a bear,
Ten emulous styles *staboyed* with care,
The whole among them seemed to tear,
And all the oddities to spare
Were set upon the stables.

Knott was delighted with a pile
Approved by fashion's leaders:
(Only he made the builder smile,
By asking every little while,
Why that was called the Twodoor style,
Which certainly had *three* doors?)
Yet better for this luckless man
If he had put a downright ban
Upon the thing *in limine;*
For, though to quit affairs his plan,
Ere many days, poor Knott began
Perforce accepting draughts, that ran
All ways — except up chimney;
The house, though painted stone to mock,
With nice white lines round every block,
Some trepidation stood in,
When tempests (with petrific shock,
So to speak,) made it really rock,
Though not a whit less wooden;

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And painted stone, howe'er well done,
Will not take in the prodigal sun
Whose beams are never quite at one
With our terrestrial lumber;
So the wood shrank around the knots,
And gaped in disconcerting spots,
And there were lots of dots and rots
And crannies without number,
Wherethrough, as you may well presume,
The wind, like water through a flume,
Came rushing in ecstatic,
Leaving, in all three floors, no room
That was not a rheumatic;
And, what with points and squares and rounds
Grown shaky on their poises,
The house at nights was full of pounds,
Thumps, bumps, creaks, scratchings, raps —
till — "Zounds!"
Cried Knott, "this goes beyond all bounds;
I do not deal in tongues and sounds,
Nor have I let my house and grounds
To a family of Noyeses!"

But, though Knott's house was full of airs,
He had but one, — a daughter;
And, as he owned much stocks and shares,
Many who wished to render theirs
Such vain, unsatisfying cares,
And needed wives to sew their tears,
In matrimony sought her;
They vowed her gold they wanted not,
Their faith would never falter,

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They longed to tie this single Knott
In the Hymeneal halter;
So daily at the door they rang,
Cards for the belle delivering,
Or in the choir at her they sang,
Achieving such a rapturous twang
As set her nerves ashivering.

Now Knott had quite made up his mind
That Colonel Jones should have her;
No beauty he, but oft we find
Sweet kernels 'neath a roughish rind,
So hoped his Jenny 'd be resigned
And make no more palaver;
Glanced at the fact that love was blind,
That girls were ratherish inclined
To pet their little crosses,
Then nosologically defined
The rate at which the system pined
In those unfortunates who dined
Upon that metaphoric kind
Of dish — their own proboscis.

But she, with many tears and moans,
Besought him not to mock her,
Said 't was too much for flesh and bones
To marry mortgages and loans,
That fathers' hearts were stocks and stones,
And that she 'd go, when Mrs. Jones,
To Davy Jones's locker;
Then gave her head a little toss
That said as plain as ever was,

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If men are always at a loss
  Mere womankind to bridle —
To try the thing on woman cross
  Were fifty times as idle;
For she a strict resolve had made
  And registered in private,
That either she would die a maid,
Or else be Mrs. Doctor Slade,
  If woman could contrive it;
And, though the wedding-day was set,
  Jenny was more so, rather,
Declaring, in a pretty pet,
That, howsoe'er they spread their net,
She would out-Jennyral them yet,
  The colonel and her father.

Just at this time the Public's eyes
  Were keenly on the watch, a stir
Beginning slowly to arise
About those questions and replies,
Those raps that unwrapped mysteries
  So rapidly at Rochester,
And Knott, already nervous grown
By lying much awake alone,
And listening, sometimes to a moan,
  And sometimes to a clatter,
Whene'er the wind at night would rouse
The gingerbread-work on his house,
Or when some hasty-tempered mouse,
Behind the plastering, made a towse
  About a family matter,
Began to wonder if his wife,

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A paralytic half her life,
  Which made it more surprising,
Might not to rule him from her urn,
Have taken a peripatetic turn
  For want of exorcising.

This thought, once nestled in his head,
Erelong contagious grew, and spread
Infecting all his mind with dread,
Until at last he lay in bed
And heard his wife, with well-known tread,
Entering the kitchen through the shed,
  (Or was 't his fancy, mocking?)
Opening the pantry, cutting bread,
And then (she 'd been some ten years dead)
  Closets and drawers unlocking;
Or, in his room (his breath grew thick)
He heard the long-familiar click
Of slender needles flying quick,
  As if she knit a stocking;
For whom? — he prayed that years might flit
  With pains rheumatic shooting,
Before those ghostly things she knit
Upon his unfleshed sole might fit,
He did not fancy it a bit,
  To stand upon that footing;
At other times, his frightened hairs
  Above the bedclothes trusting,
He heard her, full of household cares,
(No dream entrapped in supper's snares,
The foal of horrible nightmares,
But broad awake, as he declares,)

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Go bustling up and down the stairs,
Or setting back last evening's chairs,
  Or with the poker thrusting
The raked-up sea-coal's hardened crust —
And — what! impossible! it must!
He knew she had returned to dust,
And yet could scarce his senses trust,
Hearing her as she poked and fussed
  About the parlor, dusting!

Night after night he strove to sleep
  And take his ease in spite of it;
But still his flesh would chill and creep,
And, though two night-lamps he might keep,
  He could not so make light of it.
At last, quite desperate, he goes
And tells his neighbors all his woes,
  Which did but their amount enhance;
They made such mockery of his fears
That soon his days were of all jeers,
  His nights of the rueful countenance;
"I thought most folks," one neighbor said,
"Gave up the ghost when they were dead?"
Another gravely shook his head,
  Adding, "From all we hear, it's
Quite plain poor Knott is going mad —
For how can he at once be sad
  And think he's full of spirits?"
A third declared he knew a knife
  Would cut this Knott much quicker,
"The surest way to end all strife,
And lay the spirit of a wife,

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Is just to take and lick her!"
A temperance man caught up the word,
"Ah, yes," he groaned, "I 've always heard
Our poor friend somewhat slanted
Tow'rd taking liquor overmuch;
I fear these spirits may be Dutch,
(A sort of gins, or something such,)
With which his house is haunted;
I see the thing as clear as light, —
If Knott would give up getting tight,
Naught farther would be wanted:"
So all his neighbors stood aloof
And, that the spirits 'neath his roof
Were not entirely up to proof,
Unanimously granted.

Knott knew that cocks and sprites were foes,
And so bought up, Heaven only knows
How many, for he wanted crows
To give ghosts caws, as I suppose,
To think that day was breaking;
Moreover what he called his park,
He turned into a kind of ark
For dogs, because a little bark
Is a good tonic in the dark,
If one is given to waking;
But things went on from bad to worse,
His curs were nothing but a curse,
And, what was still more shocking,
Foul ghosts of living fowl made scoff
And would not think of going off
In spite of all his cocking.

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Shanghais, Bucks-counties, Dominiques,
Malays (that did n't lay for weeks,)
  Polanders, Bantams, Dorkings,
(Waiving the cost, no trifling ill,
Since each brought in his little bill,)
By day or night were never still,
But every thought of rest would kill
  With cacklings and with quorkings;
Henry the Eighth of wives got free
  By a way he had of axing;
But poor Knott's Tudor henery
Was not so fortunate, and he
  Still found his trouble waxing;
As for the dogs, the rows they made,
And how they howled, snarled, barked and
      bayed,
  Beyond all human knowledge is;
All night, as wide awake as gnats,
The terriers rumpused after rats,
Or, just for practice, taught their brats
To worry cast-off shoes and hats,
The bull-dogs settled private spats,
All chased imaginary cats,
Or raved behind the fence's slats
At real ones, or, from their mats,
With friends, miles off, held pleasant chats,
Or, like some folks in white cravats,
Contemptuous of sharps and flats,
  Sat up and sang dogsologies.
Meanwhile the cats set up a squall,
And, safe upon the garden-wall,
  All night kept cat-a-walling,

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As if the feline race were all,
In one wild cataleptic sprawl,
Into love's tortures falling.

PART II

SHOWING WHAT IS MEANT BY A FLOW OF SPIRITS.

At first the ghosts were somewhat shy,
Coming when none but Knott was nigh,
And people said 't was all their eye,
(Or rather his) a flam, the sly
Digestion's machination:
Some recommended a wet sheet,
Some a nice broth of pounded peat,
Some a cold flat-iron to the feet,
Some a decoction of lamb's-bleat,
Some a southwesterly grain of wheat;
Meat was by some pronounced unmeet,
Others thought fish most indiscreet,
And that 't was worse than all to eat
Of vegetables, sour or sweet,
(Except, perhaps, the skin of beet,)
In such a concatenation:
One quack his button gently plucks
And murmurs, "Biliary ducks!"
Says Knott, "I never ate one;"
But all, though brimming full of wrath,
Homœo, Allo, Hydropath,
Concurred in this — that t' other's path
To death's door was the straight one.
Still, spite of medical advice,

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The ghosts came thicker, and a spice
  Of mischief grew apparent;
Nor did they only come at night,
But seemed to fancy broad daylight,
Till Knott, in horror and affright,
  His unoffending hair rent;
Whene'er with handkerchief on lap,
He made his elbow-chair a trap,
To catch an after-dinner nap,
The spirits, always on the tap,
Would make a sudden *rap*, *rap*, *rap*,
The half-spun cord of sleep to snap,
(And what is life without its nap
But threadbareness and mere mishap?)
As 't were with a percussion cap
  The trouble's climax capping;
It seemed a party dried and grim
Of mummies had come to visit him,
Each getting off from every limb
  Its multitudinous wrapping;
Scratchings sometimes the walls ran round,
The merest penny-weights of sound;
Sometimes 't was only by the pound
  They carried on their dealing,
A thumping 'neath the parlor floor,
Thump-bump-thump-bumping o'er and o'er,
As if the vegetables in store
(Quiet and orderly before)
  Were all together peeling;
You would have thought the thing was done
By the spirit of some son of a gun,
  And that a forty-two-pounder,

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Or that the ghost which made such sounds
Could be none other than John Pounds,
  Of Ragged Schools the founder.
Through three gradations of affright,
The awful noises reached their height;
  At first they knocked nocturnally,
Then, for some reason, changing quite,
(As mourners, after six months' flight,
Turn suddenly from dark to light,)
  Began to knock diurnally,
And last, combining all their stocks,
  (Scotland was ne'er so full of Knox,)
Into one Chaos (father of Nox,)
Nocte pluit — they showered knocks,
  And knocked, knocked, knocked, eternally;
Ever upon the go, like buoys,
(Wooden sea-urchins,) all Knott's joys,
They turned to troubles and a noise
  That preyed on him internally.

Soon they grew wider in their scope;
Whenever Knott a door would ope,
It would ope not, or else elope
And fly back (curbless as a trope
Once started down a stanza's slope
By a bard that gave it too much rope —)
  Like a clap of thunder slamming;
And, when kind Jenny brought his hat,
(She always, when he walked, did that,)
Just as upon his head it sat,
Submitting to his settling pat,
Some unseen hand would jam it flat,

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Or give it such a furious bat
That eyes and nose went cramming
Up out of sight, and consequently,
As when in life it paddled free,
His beaver caused much damning;
If these things seem o'erstrained to be,
Read the account of Doctor Dee,
'T is in our college library;
Read Wesley's circumstantial plea,
And Mrs. Crowe, more like a bee,
Sucking the nightshade's honeyed fee,
And Stilling's Pneumatology;
Consult Scot, Glanvil, grave Wierus, and both Mathers; further see,
Webster, Casaubon, James First's treatise, a right royal Q. E. D.
Writ with the moon in perigee,
Bodin de la Demonomanie —
(Accent that last line gingerly)
All full of learning as the sea
Of fishes, and all disagree,
Save in *Sathanas apage!*
Or, what will surely put a flea
In unbelieving ears — with glee,
Out of a paper (sent to me
By some friend who forgot to P...
A... Y... — I use cryptography
Lest I his vengeful pen should dree —
His P...O...S...T...A...G...E...)
Things to the same effect I cut,
About the tantrums of a ghost,
Not more than three weeks since, at most,
Near Stratford, in Connecticut.

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Knott's Upas daily spread its roots,
Sent up on all sides livelier shoots,
And bore more pestilential fruits;
The ghosts behaved like downright brutes,
They snipped holes in his Sunday suits,
Practised all night on octave flutes,
Put peas (not peace) into his boots,
  Whereof grew corns in season,
They scotched his sheets, and, what was worse,
Stuck his silk nightcap full of burrs,
Till he, in language plain and terse,
(But much unlike a Bible verse,)
  Swore he should lose his reason.

The tables took to spinning, too,
Perpetual yarns, and arm-chairs grew
  To prophets and apostles;
One footstool vowed that only he
Of law and gospel held the key,
That teachers of whate'er degree
To whom opinion bows the knee
Wer'n't fit to teach Truth's a b c,
And were (the whole lot) to a T
  Mere fogies all and fossils;
A teapoy, late the property
  Of Knox's Aunt Keziah,
(Whom Jenny most irreverently
Had nicknamed her aunt-tipathy)
With tips emphatic claimed to be
  The prophet Jeremiah;
The tins upon the kitchen-wall,
Turned tintinnabulators all,

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And things that used to come at call
  For simple household services
Began to hop and whirl and prance,
Fit to put out of countenance
The *Commis* and *Grisettes* of France
  Or Turkey's dancing Dervises.

Of course such doings, far and wide,
With rumors filled the country-side,
And (as it is our nation's pride
To think a Truth not verified
Till with majorities allied)
Parties sprung up, affirmed, denied,
And candidates with questions plied,
Who, like the circus-riders, tried
At once both hobbies to bestride,
And each with his opponent vied
  In being inexplicit.
Earnest inquirers multiplied;
Folks, whose tenth cousins lately died,
Wrote letters long, and Knott replied;
All who could either walk or ride
Gathered to wonder or deride,
  And paid the house a visit;
Horses were to his pine-trees tied,
Mourners in every corner sighed,
Widows brought children there that cried,
Swarms of lean Seekers, eager-eyed,
(People Knott never could abide,)
Into each hole and cranny pried
With strings of questions cut and dried
From the Devout Inquirer's Guide,

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For the wise spirits to decide —
  As, for example, is it
True that the damned are fried or boiled?
Was the Earth's axis greased or oiled?
Who cleaned the moon when it was soiled?
How baldness might be cured or foiled?
  How heal diseased potatoes?
Did spirits have the sense of smell?
Where would departed spinsters dwell?
If the late Zenas Smith were well?
If Earth were solid or a shell?
Were spirits fond of Doctor Fell?
Did the bull toll Cock-Robin's knell?
What remedy would bugs expel?
If Paine's invention were a sell?
Did spirits by Webster's system spell?
Was it a sin to be a belle?
Did dancing sentence folks to hell?
If so, then where most torture fell —
  On little toes or great toes?
If life's true seat were in the brain?
Did Ensign mean to marry Jane?
By whom, in fact, was Morgan slain?
Could matter ever suffer pain?
What would take out a cherry-stain?
Who picked the pocket of Seth Crane,
Of Waldo precinct, State of Maine?
Was Sir John Franklin sought in vain?
Did primitive Christians ever train?
What was the family-name of Cain?
Them spoons, were they by Betty ta'en?
Would earth-worm poultice cure a sprain?

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Was Socrates so dreadful plain?
What teamster guided Charles's wain?
Was Uncle Ethan mad or sane,
And could his will in force remain?
If not, what counsel to retain?
Did Le Sage steal Gil Blas from Spain?
Was Junius writ by Thomas Paine?
Were ducks discomforted by rain?
How did Britannia rule the main?
Was Jonas coming back again?
Was vital truth upon the wane?
Did ghosts, to scare folks, drag a chain?
Who was our Huldah's chosen swain?
Did none have teeth pulled without payin',
  Ere ether was invented?
Whether mankind would not agree,
If the universe were tuned in C?
What was it ailed Lucindy's knee?
Whether folks eat folks in Feejee?
Whether *his* name would end with T?
If Saturn's rings were two or three,
And what bump in Phrenology
  They truly represented?
These problems dark, wherein they groped,
Wherewith man's reason vainly coped,
Now that the spirit-world was oped,
In all humility they hoped
  Would be resolved *instanter;*
Each of the miscellaneous rout
Brought his, or her, own little doubt,
And wished to pump the spirits out,
Through his or her own private spout,
  Into his or her decanter.

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PART III

WHEREIN IT IS SHOWN THAT THE MOST ARDENT SPIRITS ARE MORE ORNAMENTAL THAN USEFUL.

MANY a speculating wight
Came by express-trains, day and night,
To see if Knott would "sell his right,"
Meaning to make the ghosts a sight —
  What they called a "meenaygerie";
One threatened, if he would not "trade,"
His run of custom to invade,
(He could not these sharp folks persuade
That he was not, in some way, paid,)
  And stamp him as a plagiary,
By coming down, at one fell swoop,
With THE ORIGINAL KNOCKING TROUPE,
  Come recently from Hades,
Who (for a quarter-dollar heard)
Would ne'er rap out a hasty word
Whence any blame might be incurred
  From the most fastidious ladies;
The late lamented Jesse Soule
To stir the ghosts up with a pole
And be director of the whole,
  Who was engaged the rather
For the rare merits he 'd combine,
Having been in the spirit line,
Which trade he only did resign,
With general applause, to shine,
Awful in mail of cotton fine,
  As ghost of Hamlet's father!

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Another a fair plan reveals
Never yet hit on, which, he feels,
To Knott's religious sense appeals —
"We 'll have your house set up on wheels,
A speculation pious;
For music, we can shortly find
A barrel-organ that will grind
Psalm-tunes — an instrument designed
For the New England tour — refined
From secular drosses, and inclined
To an unworldly turn, (combined
With no sectarian bias;)
Then, travelling by stages slow,
Under the style of Knott & Co.,
I would accompany the show
As moral lecturer, the foe
Of Rationalism; while you could throw
The rappings in, and make them go
Strict Puritan principles, you know,
(How *do* you make 'em? with your toe?)
And the receipts which thence might flow,
We could divide between us;
Still more attractions to combine,
Beside these services of mine,
I will throw in a very fine
(It would do nicely for a sign)
Original Titian's Venus."
Another offered handsome fees
If Knott would get Demosthenes
(Nay, his mere knuckles, for more ease)
To rap a few short sentences;
Or if, for want of proper keys,

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His Greek might make confusion,
Then just to get a rap from Burke,
To recommend a little work
On Public Elocution.
Meanwhile, the spirits made replies
To all the reverent *whats* and *whys*,
Resolving doubts of every size,
And giving seekers grave and wise,
Who came to know their destinies,
A rap-turous reception;
When unbelievers void of grace
Came to investigate the place,
(Creatures of Sadducistic race,
With grovelling intellects and base,)
They could not find the slightest trace
To indicate deception;
Indeed, it is declared by some
That spirits (of this sort) are glum,
Almost, or wholly, deaf and dumb,
And (out of self-respect) quite mum
To skeptic natures cold and numb,
Who of *this* kind of Kingdom Come
Have not a just conception:
True, there were people who demurred
That, though the raps no doubt were heard
Both under them and o'er them,
Yet, somehow, when a search they made,
They found Miss Jenny sore afraid,
Or Jenny's lover, Doctor Slade,
Equally awestruck and dismayed,
Or Deborah, the chambermaid,
Whose terrors not to be gainsaid,

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In laughs hysteric were displayed,
Was always there before them;
This had its due effect with some
Who straight departed, muttering, Hum!
Transparent hoax! and Gammon!
But these were few: believing souls,
Came, day by day, in larger shoals,
As the ancients to the windy holes
'Neath Delphi's tripod brought their doles,
Or to the shrine of Ammon.

The spirits seemed exceeding tame,
Call whom you fancied, and he came;
The shades august of eldest fame
You summoned with an awful ease;
As grosser spirits gurgled out
From chair and table with a spout,
In Auerbach's cellar once, to flout
The senses of the rabble rout,
Where'er the gimlet twirled about
Of cunning Mephistopheles,
So did these spirits seem in store,
Behind the wainscot or the door,
Ready to thrill the being's core
Of every enterprising bore
With their astounding glamour;
Whatever ghost one wished to hear,
By strange coincidence, was near
To make the past or future clear
(Sometimes in shocking grammar)
By raps and taps, now there, now here —
It seemed as if the spirit queer

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Of some departed auctioneer
Were doomed to practise by the year
With the spirit of his hammer:
Whate'er you asked was answered, yet
One could not very deeply get
Into the obliging spirits' debt,
Because they used the alphabet
In all communications,
And new revealings (though sublime)
Rapped out, one letter at a time,
With boggles, hesitations,
Stoppings, beginnings o'er again,
And getting matters into train,
Could hardly overload the brain
With too excessive rations,
Since just to ask *if two and two*
Really make four? or, *How d' ye do?*
And get the fit replies thereto
In the tramundane rat-tat-too,
Might ask a whole day's patience.

'T was strange ('mongst other things) to find
In what odd sets the ghosts combined,
Happy forthwith to thump any
Piece of intelligence inspired,
The truth whereof had been inquired
By some one of the company;
For instance, Fielding, Mirabeau,
Orator Henley, Cicero,
Paley, John Zisca, Marivaux,
Melancthon, Robertson, Junot,
Scaliger, Chesterfield, Rousseau,

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Hakluyt, Boccaccio, South, De Foe,
Diaz, Josephus, Richard Roe,
Odin, Arminius, Charles *le gros*,
Tiresias, the late James Crow,
Casabianca, Grose, Prideaux,
Old Grimes, Young Norval, Swift, Brissot,
Maimonides, the Chevalier D'O,
Socrates, Fenelon, Job, Stow,
The inventor of *Elixir pro*,
Euripides, Spinoza, Poe,
Confucius, Hiram Smith, and Fo,
Came (as it seemed, somewhat *de trop*)
With a disembodied Esquimaux,
To say that it was so and so,
With Franklin's expedition ;
One testified to ice and snow,
One that the mercury was low,
One that his progress was quite slow,
One that he much desired to go,
One that the cook had frozen his toe,
(Dissented from by Dandolo,
Wordsworth, Cynaegirus, Boileau,
La Hontan, and Sir Thomas Roe,)
One saw twelve white bears in a row,
One saw eleven and a crow,
With other things we could not know
(Of great statistic value, though,)
By our mere mortal vision.

Sometimes the spirits made mistakes,
And seemed to play at ducks and drakes
With bold inquiry's heaviest stakes

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In science or in mystery;
They knew so little (and that wrong)
Yet rapped it out so bold and strong,
One would have said the unnumbered throng
Had been Professors of History;
What made it odder was, that those
Who, you would naturally suppose,
Could solve a question, if they chose,
As easily as count their toes,
Were just the ones that blundered;
One day, Ulysses happening down,
A reader of Sir Thomas Browne
And who (with him) had wondered
What song it was the Sirens sang,
Asked the shrewd Ithacan — *bang! bang!*
With this response the chamber rang,
"I guess it was Old Hundred."
And Franklin, being asked to name
The reason why the lightning came,
Replied, "Because it thundered."

On one sole point the ghosts agreed,
One fearful point, than which, indeed,
Nothing could seem absurder;
Poor Colonel Jones they all abused
And finally downright accused
The poor old man of murder;
'T was thus; by dreadful raps was shown
Some spirit's longing to make known
A bloody fact, which he alone
Was privy to, (such ghosts more prone
In Earth's affairs to meddle are;)

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Who are you? with awe-stricken looks,
All ask: his airy knuckles he crooks,
And raps, "I *was* Eliab Snooks,
That used to be a pedler;
Some on ye still are on my books!"
Whereat, to inconspicuous nooks,
(More fearing this than common spooks,)
Shrank each indebted meddler;
Further the vengeful ghost declared
That while his earthly life was spared,
About the country he had fared,
A duly licensed follower
Of that much-wandering trade that wins
Slow profit from the sale of tins
And various kinds of hollow-ware;
That Colonel Jones enticed him in,
Pretending that he wanted tin,
There slew him with a rolling-pin,
Hid him in a potato-bin,
And (the same night) him ferried
Across Great Pond to t' other shore,
And there, on land of Widow Moore,
Just where you turn to Larkin's store,
Under a rock him buried;
Some friends (who happened to be by)
He called upon to testify
That what he said was not a lie,
And that he did not stir this
Foul matter, out of any spite
But from a simple love of right; —
Which statements the Nine Worthies,
Rabbi Akiba, Charlemagne,

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Seth, Colley Cibber, General Wayne,
Cambyses, Tasso, Tubal-Cain,
The owner of a castle in Spain,
Jehanghire, and the Widow of Nain,
(The friends aforesaid,) made more plain
And by loud raps attested;
To the same purport testified
Plato, John Wilkes, and Colonel Pride
Who knew said Snooks before he died,
Had in his wares invested,
Thought him entitled to belief
And freely could concur, in brief,
In everything the rest did.

Eliab this occasion seized,
(Distinctly here the spirit sneezed,)
To say that he should ne'er be eased
Till Jenny married whom she pleased,
Free from all checks and urgin's,
(This spirit dropt his final g's)
And that, unless Knott quickly sees
This done, the spirits to appease,
They would come back his life to tease,
As thick as mites in ancient cheese,
And let his house on an endless lease
To the ghosts (terrific rappers these
And veritable Eumenides)
Of the Eleven Thousand Virgins!

Knott was perplexed and shook his head,
He did not wish his child to wed
With a suspected murderer,

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(For, true or false, the rumor spread,)
But as for this roiled life he led,
"It would not answer," so he said,
"To have it go no furderer."
At last, scarce knowing what it meant,
Reluctantly he gave consent
That Jenny, since 't was evident
That she *would* follow her own bent,
Should make her own election;
For that appeared the only way
These frightful noises to allay
Which had already turned him gray
And plunged him in dejection.

Accordingly, this artless maid
Her father's ordinance obeyed,
And, all in whitest crape arrayed,
(Miss Pulsifer the dresses made
And wishes here the fact displayed
That she still carries on the trade,
The third door south from Bagg's Arcade,)
A very faint "I do" essayed
And gave her hand to Hiram Slade,
From which time forth, the ghosts were laid,
And ne'er gave trouble after;
But the Selectmen, be it known,
Dug underneath the aforesaid stone,
Where the poor pedler's corpse was thrown,
And found thereunder a jaw-bone,
Though, when the crowner sat thereon,
He nothing hatched, except alone
Successive broods of laughter;

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It was a frail and dingy thing,
In which a grinder or two did cling,
  In color like molasses,
Which surgeons, called from far and wide,
Upon the horror to decide,
  Having put on their glasses,
Reported thus: "To judge by looks,
These bones, by some queer hooks or crooks,
May have belonged to Mr. Snooks,
But, as men deepest-read in books
  Are perfectly aware, bones,
If buried fifty years or so,
Lose their identity and grow
  From human bones to bare bones."

Still, if to Jaalam you go down,
You 'll find two parties in the town,
One headed by Benaiah Brown,
And one by Perez Tinkham;
The first believe the ghosts all through
And vow that they shall never rue
The happy chance by which they knew
That people in Jupiter are blue,
And very fond of Irish stew,
Two curious facts which Prince Lee Boo
Rapped clearly to a chosen few —
  Whereas the others think 'em
A trick got up by Doctor Slade
With Deborah the chambermaid
  And that sly cretur Jinny.
That all the revelations wise,
At which the Brownites made big eyes,

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Might have been given by Jared Keyes,
A natural fool and ninny,
And, last week, did n't Eliab Snooks
Come back with never better looks,
As sharp as new-bought mackerel hooks,
And bright as a new pin, eh?
Good Parson Wilbur, too, avers
(Though to be mixed in parish stirs
Is worse than handling chestnut-burrs)
That no case to his mind occurs
Where spirits ever did converse,
Save in a kind of guttural Erse,
(So say the best authorities;)
And that a charge by raps conveyed
Should be most scrupulously weighed
And searched into, before it is
Made public, since it may give pain
That cannot soon be cured again,
And one word may infix a stain
Which ten cannot gloss over,
Though speaking for his private part,
He is rejoiced with all his heart
Miss Knott missed not her lover.

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FRAGMENTS OF AN UNFINISHED POEM

I AM a man of forty, sirs, a native of East Haddam,
And have some reason to surmise that I descend from Adam;
But what 's my pedigree to you? That I will soon unravel;
I 've sucked my Haddam-Eden dry, therefore desire to travel,
And, as a natural consequence, presume I need n't say,
I wish to write some letters home and have those letters p—
[I spare the word suggestive of those grim Next Morns that mount
Clump, clump, the stairways of the brain with — "*Sir, my small account,*"
And, after every good we gain — Love, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom — still,
As punctual as a cuckoo clock, hold up their little bill,
The *garçons* in our Café of Life, by dreaming us forgot —
Sitting, like Homer's heroes, full and musing God knows what, —
Till they say, bowing, *S'il vous plait, voila, Messieurs, la note!*]

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I would not hint at this so soon, but in our callous
day,
The tollman Debt, who drops his bar across the
world's highway,
Great Cæsar in mid-march would stop, if Cæsar
could not pay;
Pilgriming's dearer than it was: men cannot travel
now
Scot-free from Dan to Beersheba upon a simple vow;
Nay, as long back as Bess's time, when Walsing-
ham went over
Ambassador to Cousin France, at Canterbury and
Dover
He was so fleeced by innkeepers that, ere he quitted
land,
He wrote to the Prime Minister to take the knaves
in hand.
If I with staff and scallop-shell should try my way
to win,
Would Bonifaces quarrel as to who should take me
in?
Or would my pilgrim's progress end where Bunyan
started his on,
And my grand tour be round and round the back-
yard of a prison?
I give you here a saying deep and therefore, haply
true;
'T is out of Merlin's prophecies, but quite as good
as new:
The question hoath for men and meates longe vopages
yt beginne
Lyes in a notshell, rather saye lyes in a case of tinne.

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But, though men may not travel now, as in the Middle Ages,
With self-sustaining retinues of little gilt-edged pages,
Yet one may manage pleasantly, where'er he likes to roam,
By sending his small pages (at so much per small page) home;
And if a staff and scallop-shell won't serve so well as then,
Our outlay is about as small — just paper, ink, and pen.
Be thankful! Humbugs never die, more than the wandering Jew;
Bankrupt, they publish their own deaths, slink for a while from view,
Then take an *alias*, change the sign, and the old trade renew;
Indeed, 't is wondrous how each Age, though laughing at the Past,
Insists on having its tight shoe made on the same old last;
How it is sure its system would break up at once without
The bunion which it *will* believe hereditary gout;
How it takes all its swans for geese, nay, stranger yet and sadder,
Sees in its treadmill's fruitless jog a heavenward Jacob's-ladder,
Shouts, *Lo, the Shining Heights are reached! One moment more aspire!*
Trots into cramps its poor, dear legs, gets never an inch the higher,

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And like the others, ends with pipe and mug beside the fire.
There, 'tween each doze, it whiffs and sips and watches with a sneer
The green recruits that trudge and sweat where it had swinked whilere,
And sighs to think this soon spent zeal should be in simple truth
The only interval between old Fogyhood and Youth:
"Well," thus it muses, "well, what odds? 'T is not for us to warn;
'T will be the same when we are dead, and was ere we were born;
Without the Treadmill, too, how grind our store of winter's corn?
Had we no stock, nor twelve per cent. received from Treadmill shares,
We might . . . but these poor devils at last will get our easy-chairs.
High aims and hopes have great rewards, they, too, serene and snug,
Shall one day have their soothing pipe and their enlivening mug;
From Adam, empty-handed Youth hath always heard the hum
Of Good Times Coming, and will hear until the last day come;
Young ears hear forward, old ones back, and, while the earth rolls on,
Full-handed Eld shall hear recede the steps of Good Times Gone;
Ah what a cackle we set up whene'er an egg was laid!

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Cack-cack-cack-cackle! rang around, the scratch
for worms was stayed,
Cut-cut-ca-dah-cut! from *this* egg the coming
cock shall stalk!
The great New Era dawns, the age of Deeds and
not of Talk!
And every stupid hen of us hugged close his egg
of chalk,
Thought, — sure, I feel life stir within, each day
with greater strength,
When lo, the chick! from former chicks he dif-
fered not a jot,
But grew and crew and scratched and went, like
those before, to pot!"
So muse the dim *Emeriti*, and, mournful though
it be,
I must confess a kindred thought hath sometimes
come to me,
Who, though but just of forty turned, have heard
the rumorous fame
Of nine and ninety Coming Men, all — coming
till they came.
Pure Mephistopheles all this? the vulgar nature
jeers?
Good friend, while I was writing it, my eyes were
dim with tears;
Thrice happy he who cannot see, or who his eyes
can shut,
Life's deepest sorrow is contained in that small
word there — But!

. . . . . .

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We 're pretty nearly crazy here with change and go ahead,
With flinging our caught bird away for two i' th' bush instead,
With butting 'gainst the wall which we declare *shall* be a portal,
And questioning Deeps that never yet have oped their lips to mortal;
We 're growing pale and hollow-eyed, and out of all condition,
With *mediums* and prophetic chairs, and crickets with a mission,
(The most astounding oracles since Balaam's donkey spoke, —
'T would seem our furniture was all of Dodonean oak.)
Make but the public laugh, be sure 't will take you to be somebody;
'T will wrench its button from your clutch, my densely earnest glum body;
'T is good, this noble earnestness, good in its place, but why
Make great Achilles' shield the pan to bake a penny pie?
Why, when we have a kitchen-range, insist that we shall stop,
And bore clear down to central fires to broil our daily chop?
Excalibur and Durandart are swords of price, but then
Why draw them sternly when you wish to trim your nails or pen?

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Small gulf between the ape and man; you bridge
it with your staff;
But it will be impassable until the ape can laugh; —
No, no, be common now and then, be sensible, be
funny,
And, as Siberians bait their traps for bears with
pots of honey,
From which ere they 'll withdraw their snouts,
they 'll suffer many a club-lick,
So bait your moral figure-of-fours to catch the
Orson public.
Look how the dead leaves melt their way down
through deep-drifted snow;
They take the sun-warmth down with them —
pearls could not conquer so;
There *is* a moral here, you see; if you would
preach, you must
Steep all your truths in sunshine would you have
them pierce the crust;
Brave Jeremiah, you are grand and terrible, a sign
And wonder, but were never quite a popular
divine;
Fancy the figure you would cut among the nuts
and wine!
I, on occasion, too, could preach, but hold it wiser
far
To give the public sermons it will take with its
cigar,
And morals fugitive, and vague as are these smoke-
wreaths light
In which . . . I trace . . . a . . . let me see —
bless me! 't is out of sight.

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. . . . . .

There are some goodish things at sea; for instance, one can feel
A grandeur in the silent man forever at the wheel,
That bit of two-legged intellect, that particle of drill,
Who the huge floundering hulk inspires with reason, brain, and will,
And makes the ship, though skies are black and headwinds whistle loud,
Obey her conscience there which feels the loadstar through the cloud;
And when by lusty western gales the full-sailed barque is hurled
Towards the great moon which, setting on the silent underworld,
Rounds luridly up to look on ours, and shoots a broadening line,
Of palpitant light from crest to crest across the ridgy brine,
Then from the bows look back and feel a thrill that never stales,
In that full-bosomed, swan-white pomp of onward-yearning sails;
Ah, when dear cousin Bull laments that you can't make a poem,
Take him aboard a clipper-ship, young Jonathan, and show him
A work of art that in its grace and grandeur may compare
With any thing that any race has fashioned any where;

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'T is not a statue, grumbles John; nay, if you come
to that,
We think of Hyde Park Corner, and concede you
beat us flat
With your equestrian statue to a Nose and a Cocked-
hat;
But 't is not a cathedral; well, e'en that we will
allow,
Both statues and cathedrals are anachronistic now;
Your minsters, coz, the monuments of men who
conquered you,
You'd sell a bargain, if we'd take the deans and
chapters too;
No; mortal men build nowadays, as always here-
tofore,
Good temples to the gods which they in very truth
adore;
The shepherds of this Broker Age, with all their
willing flocks,
Although they bow to stones no more, do bend the
knee to stocks,
And churches can't be beautiful though crowded,
floor and gallery,
If people worship preacher, and if preacher wor-
ship salary;
'T is well to look things in the face, the god o' the
modern universe,
Hermes, cares naught for halls of art and libraries
of puny verse,
If they don't sell, he notes them thus upon his
ledger — say, *per*
Contra to a loss of so much stone, best Russia duck
and paper;

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And, after all, about this Art men talk a deal of fudge,
Each nation has its path marked out, from which it must not budge;
The Romans had as little art as Noah in his ark,
Yet somehow on this globe contrived to make an epic mark;
Religion, painting, sculpture, song — for these they ran up jolly ticks
With Greece and Egypt, but they were great artists in their politics,
And if we make no minsters, John, nor epics, yet the Fates
Are not entirely deaf to men who *can* build ships and states;
The arts are never pioneers, but men have strength and health
Who, called on suddenly, can improvise a commonwealth,
Nay, can more easily go on and frame them by the dozen,
Than you can make a dinner-speech, dear sympathizing cousin:
And, though our restless Jonathan have not your graver bent, sure he
Does represent this hand-to-mouth, pert, rapid, nineteenth century;
This is the Age of Scramble; men move faster than they did
When they pried up the imperial Past's deep-dusted coffin-lid,
Searching for scrolls of precedent; the wire-leashed lightning now

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Replaces Delphos — men don't leave the steamer
for the scow;
What public, were they new to-day, would ever
stop to read
The Iliad, the Shanàmeh, or the Nibelungenlied?
Their public 's gone, the artist Greek, the lettered
Shah, the hairy Graf —
Folio and plesiosaur sleep well; *we* weary o'er a
paragraph;
The mind moves planet-like no more, it fizzes,
cracks, and bustles;
From end to end with journals dry the land o'er-
shadowed rustles,
As with dead leaves a winter-beech, and, with their
breath-roused jars
Amused, we care not if they hide the eternal skies
and stars;
Down to the general level of the Board of Brokers
sinking,
The Age takes in the newspapers, or, to say sooth
unshrinking,
The newspapers take in the Age, and stocks do all
the thinking.

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AN ORIENTAL APOLOGUE

I.

SOMEWHERE in India, upon a time,
(Read it not Injah, or you spoil the verse,)
There dwelt two saints whose privilege sublime
It was to sit and watch the world grow worse,
Their only care (in that delicious clime)
At proper intervals to pray and curse;
Pracrit the dialect each prudent brother
Used for himself, Damnonian for the other.

II.

One half the time of each was spent in praying
For blessings on his own unworthy head,
The other half in fearfully portraying
Where certain folks would go when they were dead;
This system of exchanges — there 's no saying
To what more solid barter 't would have led,
But that a river, vext with boils and swellings
At rainy times, kept peace between their dwellings.

III.

So they two played at wordy battledore
And kept a curse forever in the air,

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Flying this way or that from shore to shore;
Nor other labor did this holy pair,
Clothed and supported from the lavish store
Which crowds lanigerous brought with daily care;
They toiled not, neither did they spin; their bias
Was tow'rd the harder task of being pious.

IV.

Each from his hut rushed six score times a day,
Like a great canon of the Church full-rammed
With cartridge theologic, (so to say,)
Touched himself off, and then, recoiling, slammed
His hovel's door behind him in a way
That to his foe said plainly, — *you'll* be damned;
And so like Potts and Wainwright, shrill and strong
The two D—D'd each other all day long.

V.

One was a dancing Dervise, a Mohammedan,
The other was a Hindoo, a gymnosophist;
One kept his whatd'yecallit and his Ramadan,
Laughing to scorn the sacred rites and laws of his
Transfluvial rival, who, in turn, called Ahmed an
Old top, and, as a clincher, shook across a fist
With nails six inches long, yet lifted not
His eyes from off his navel's mystic knot.

VI.

"Who whirls not round six thousand times an hour
Will go," screamed Ahmed, "to the evil place;

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May he eat dirt, and may the dog and Giaour
Defile the graves of him and all his race;
Allah loves faithful souls and gives them power
To spin till they are purple in the face;
Some folks get you know what, but he that pure is
Earns Paradise and ninety thousand houries."

VII.

"Upon the silver mountain, South by East,
Sits Brahma fed upon the sacred bean;
He loves those men whose nails are still increased,
Who all their lives keep ugly, foul, and lean;
'T is of his grace that not a bird or beast
Adorned with claws like mine was ever seen;
The suns and stars are Brahma's thoughts divine
Even as these trees I seem to see are mine."

VIII.

"Thou seem'st to see, indeed!" roared Ahmed back;
"Were I but once across this plaguy stream,
With a stout sapling in my hand, one whack
On those lank ribs would rid thee of that dream!
Thy Brahma-blasphemy is ipecac
To my soul's stomach; couldst thou grasp the scheme
Of true redemption, thou wouldst know that Deity
Whirls by a kind of blessed spontaneity.

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IX.

"And this it is which keeps our earth here going
With all the stars." — "Oh, vile! but there's a place
Prepared for such; to think of Brahma throwing
Worlds like a juggler's balls up into Space!
Why, not so much as a smooth lotos blowing
Is e'er allowed that silence to efface
Which broods round Brahma, and our earth, 't is known,
Rests on a tortoise, moveless as this stone."

X.

So they kept up their banning amœbæan,
When suddenly came floating down the stream
A youth whose face like an incarnate pæan
Glowed, 't was so full of grandeur and of gleam;
"If there *be* gods, then, doubtless, this must be one,"
Thought both at once, and then began to scream,
"Surely, whate'er immortals know, thou knowest,
Decide between us twain before thou goest!"

XI.

The youth was drifting in a slim canoe
Most like a huge white water-lily's petal,
But neither of our theologians knew
Whereof 't was made; whether of heavenly metal
Seldseen, or of a vast pearl split in two
And hollowed, was a point they could not settle;

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'T was good debate-seed, though, and bore large fruit
In after years of many a tart dispute.

XII.

There were no wings upon the stranger's shoulders,
And yet he seemed so capable of rising
That, had he soared like thistledown, beholders
Had thought the circumstance noways surprising;
Enough that he remained, and, when the scolders
Hailed him as umpire in their vocal prize-ring,
The painter of his boat he lightly threw
Around a lotos-stem, and brought her to.

XIII.

The strange youth had a look as if he might
Have trod far planets where the atmosphere
(Of nobler temper) steeps the face with light,
Just as our skins are tanned and freckled here;
His air was that of a cosmopolite
In the wide universe from sphere to sphere;
Perhaps he was (his face had such grave beauty)
An officer of Saturn's guards off duty.

XIV.

Both saints began to unfold their tales at once,
Both wished their tales, like simial ones, prehensile,
That they might seize his ear; *fool! knave!* and *dunce!*
Flew zigzag back and forth, like strokes of pencil

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In a child's fingers; voluble as duns,
They jabbered like the stones on that immense hill
In the Arabian Nights; until the stranger
Began to think his ear-drums in some danger.

XV.

In general those who nothing have to say
Contrive to spend the longest time in doing it;
They turn and vary it in every way,
Hashing it, stewing it, mincing it, *ragouting* it;
Sometimes they keep it purposely at bay,
Then let it slip to be again pursuing it;
They drone it, groan it, whisper it and shout it,
Refute it, flout it, swear to 't, prove it, doubt it.

XVI.

Our saints had practised for some thirty years;
Their talk, beginning with a single stem,
Spread like a banyan, sending down live piers,
Colonies of digression, and, in them,
Germs of yet new dispersion; once by the ears,
They could convey damnation in a hem,
And blow the pinch of premise-priming off
Long syllogistic batteries, with a cough.

XVII.

Each had a theory that the human ear
A providential tunnel was, which led
To a huge vacuum (and surely here
They showed some knowledge of the general head),
For cant to be decanted through, a mere
Auricular canal or mill-race fed

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All day and night, in sunshine and in shower,
From their vast heads of milk-and-water-power.

XVIII.

The present being a peculiar case,
Each with unwonted zeal the other scouted,
Put his spurred hobby through its every pace,
Pished, pshawed, poohed, horribled, bahed, jeered, sneered, flouted,
Sniffed, nonsensed, infideled, fudged, with his face
Looked scorn too nicely shaded to be shouted,
And, with each inch of person and of vesture,
Contrived to hint some most disdainful gesture.

XIX.

At length, when their breath's end was come about,
And both could now and then just gasp "impostor!"
Holding their heads thrust menacingly out,
As staggering cocks keep up their fighting posture,
The stranger smiled and said, "Beyond a doubt
'T is fortunate, my friends, that you have lost your
United parts of speech, or it had been
Impossible for me to get between.

XX.

"Produce! says Nature, — what have you produced?
A new strait-waistcoat for the human mind;
Are you not limbed, nerved, jointed, arteried, juiced,

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As other men? yet, faithless to your kind,
Rather like noxious insects you are used
To puncture life's fair fruit, beneath the rind
Laying your creed-eggs, whence in time there spring
Consumers new to eat and buzz and sting.

XXI.

"Work! you have no conception how 't will sweeten
Your views of Life and Nature, God and Man;
Had you been forced to earn what you have eaten,
Your heaven had shown a less dyspeptic plan;
At present your whole function is to eat ten
And talk ten times as rapidly as you can;
Were your shape true to cosmogonic laws,
You would be nothing but a pair of jaws.

XXII.

"Of all the useless beings in creation
The earth could spare most easily you bakers
Of little clay gods, formed in shape and fashion
Precisely in the image of their makers;
Why, it would almost move a saint to passion,
To see these blind and deaf, the hourly breakers
Of God's own image in their brother men,
Set themselves up to tell the how, where, when,

XXIII.

"Of God's existence; one's digestion 's worse —
So makes a god of vengeance and of blood;

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Another, — but no matter, they reverse
Creation's plan, out of their own vile mud
Pat up a god, and burn, drown, hang, or curse
Whoever worships not; each keeps his stud
Of texts which wait with saddle on and bridle
To hunt down atheists to their ugly idol.

XXIV.

"This, I perceive, has been your occupation;
You should have been more usefully employed;
All men are bound to earn their daily ration,
Where States make not that primal contract void
By cramps and limits; simple devastation
Is the worm's task, and what he has destroyed
His monument; creating is man's work
And that, too, something more than mist and murk."

XXV.

So having said, the youth was seen no more,
And straightway our sage Brahmin, the philosopher,
Cried, "That was aimed at thee, thou endless bore,
Idle and useless as the growth of moss over
A rotting tree-trunk!" "I would square that score
Full soon," replied the Dervise, "could I cross over
And catch thee by the beard. Thy nails I'd trim
And make thee work, as was advised by him."

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XXVI.

"Work? Am I not at work from morn till night
Sounding the deeps of oracles umbilical
Which for man's guidance never come to light,
With all their various aptitudes, until I call?"
"And I, do I not twirl from left to right
For conscience' sake? Is that no work? Thou silly gull,
He had thee in his eye; 't was Gabriel
Sent to reward my faith, I know him well."

XXVII.

"'T was Vishnu, thou vile whirligig!" and so
The good old quarrel was begun anew;
One would have sworn the sky was black as sloe,
Had but the other dared to call it blue;
Nor were the followers who fed them slow
To treat each other with their curses, too,
Each hating t' other (moves it tears or laughter?)
Because he thought him sure of hell hereafter.

XXVIII.

At last some genius built a bridge of boats
Over the stream, and Ahmed's zealots filed
Across, upon a mission to (cut throats
And) spread religion pure and undefiled;
They sowed the propagandist's wildest oats,
Cutting off all, down to the smallest child,
And came back, giving thanks for such fat mercies,
To find their harvest gone past prayers or curses.

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XXIX.

All gone except their saint's religious hops,
Which he kept up with more than common flourish;
But these, however satisfying crops
For the inner man, were not enough to nourish
The body politic, which quickly drops
Reserve in such sad junctures, and turns currish;
So Ahmed soon got cursed for all the famine
Where'er the popular voice could edge a damn in.

XXX.

At first he pledged a miracle quite boldly,
And, for a day or two, they growled and waited;
But, finding that this kind of manna coldly
Sat on their stomachs, they erelong berated
The saint for still persisting in that old lie,
Till soon the whole machine of saintship grated,
Ran slow, creaked, stopped, and, wishing him in Tophet,
They gathered strength enough to stone the prophet.

XXXI.

Some stronger ones contrived (by eating leather,
Their weaker friends, and one thing or another)
The winter months of scarcity to weather;
Among these was the late saint's younger brother,
Who, in the spring, collecting them together,
Persuaded them that Ahmed's holy pother
Had wrought in their behalf, and that the place
Of Saint should be continued to his race.

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XXXII.

Accordingly, 't was settled on the spot
That Allah favored that peculiar breed;
Beside, as all were satisfied, 't would not
Be quite respectable to have the need
Of public spiritual food forgot;
And so the tribe, with proper forms, decreed
That he, and, failing him, his next of kin,
Forever for the people's good should spin.

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UNDER THE WILLOWS, AND OTHER POEMS

TO CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

AGRO DOLCE

THE wind is roistering out of doors,
My windows shake and my chimney roars;
My Elmwood chimneys seem crooning to me,
As of old, in their moody, minor key,
And out of the past the hoarse wind blows,
As I sit in my arm-chair, and toast my toes.

"Ho! ho! nine-and-forty," they seem to sing,
"We saw you a little toddling thing.
We knew you child and youth and man,
A wonderful fellow to dream and plan,
With a great thing always to come, — who knows?
Well, well! 't is some comfort to toast one's toes.

"How many times have you sat at gaze
Till the mouldering fire forgot to blaze,
Shaping among the whimsical coals
Fancies and figures and shining goals!
What matters the ashes that cover those?
While hickory lasts you can toast your toes.

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"O dream-ship-builder! where are they all,
Your grand three-deckers, deep-chested and tall,
That should crush the waves under canvas piles,
And anchor at last by the Fortunate Isles?
There 's gray in your beard, the years turn foes,
While you muse in your arm-chair, and toast your
toes."

I sit and dream that I hear, as of yore,
My Elmwood chimneys' deep-throated roar;
If much be gone, there is much remains;
By the embers of loss I count my gains,
You and yours with the best, till the old hope glows
In the fanciful flame, as I toast my toes.

Instead of a fleet of broad-browed ships,
To send a child's armada of chips!
Instead of the great guns, tier on tier,
A freight of pebbles and grass-blades sere!
"Well, maybe more love with the less gift goes,"
I growl, as, half moody, I toast my toes.

UNDER THE WILLOWS

FRANK-HEARTED hostess of the field and wood,
Gypsy, whose roof is every spreading tree,
June is the pearl of our New England year.
Still a surprisal, though expected long,
Her coming startles. Long she lies in wait,
Makes many a feint, peeps forth, draws coyly back,
Then, from some southern ambush in the sky,

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With one great gush of blossom storms the world.
A week ago the sparrow was divine;
The bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence,
Was as a rhymer ere the poet come;
But now, oh rapture! sunshine winged and voiced,
Pipe blown through by the warm wild breath of the West
Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud,
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,
The bobolink has come, and, like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what
Save *June! Dear June! Now God be praised for June.*

May is a pious fraud of the almanac,
A ghastly parody of real Spring
Shaped out of snow and breathed with eastern wind;
Or if, o'er-confident, she trust the date,
And, with her handful of anemones,
Herself as shivery, steal into the sun,
The season need but turn his hourglass round,
And Winter suddenly, like crazy Lear,
Reels back, and brings the dead May in his arms,
Her budding breasts and wan dislustred front
With frosty streaks and drifts of his white beard
All overblown. Then, warmly walled with books,
While my wood-fire supplies the sun's defect,
Whispering old forest-sagas in its dreams,
I take my May down from the happy shelf

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Where perch the world's rare song-birds in a row,
Waiting my choice to open with full breast,
And beg an alms of springtime, ne'er denied
Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods
Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year.

July breathes hot, sallows the crispy fields,
Curls up the wan leaves of the lilac-hedge,
And every eve cheats us with show of clouds
That braze the horizon's western rim, or hang
Motionless, with heaped canvas drooping idly,
Like a dim fleet by starving men besieged,
Conjectured half, and half descried afar,
Helpless of wind, and seeming to slip back
Adown the smooth curve of the oily sea.

But June is full of invitations sweet,
Forth from the chimney's yawn and thrice-read tomes
To leisurely delights and sauntering thoughts
That brook no ceiling narrower than the blue.
The cherry, drest for bridal, at my pane
Brushes, then listens, *Will he come?* The bee,
All dusty as a miller, takes his toll
Of powdery gold, and grumbles. What a day
To sun me and do nothing! Nay, I think
Merely to bask and ripen is sometimes
The student's wiser business; the brain
That forages all climes to line its cells,
Ranging both worlds on lightest wings of wish,
Will not distil the juices it has sucked
To the sweet substance of pellucid thought,

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Except for him who hath the secret learned
To mix his blood with sunshine, and to take
The winds into his pulses. Hush! 't is he!
My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the packthread I had lightly wound
About the bough to help his housekeeping, —
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing me who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the providence that hides and helps.
Heave, ho! Heave, ho! he whistles as the twine
Slackens its hold; *once more, now!* and a flash
Lightens across the sunlight to the elm
Where his mate dangles at her cup of felt.
Nor all his booty is the thread; he trails
My loosened thought with it along the air,
And I must follow, would I ever find
The inward rhyme to all this wealth of life.

I care not how men trace their ancestry,
To ape or Adam; let them please their whim;
But I in June am midway to believe
A tree among my far progenitors,
Such sympathy is mine with all the race,
Such mutual recognition vaguely sweet
There is between us. Surely there are times
When they consent to own me of their kin,
And condescend to me, and call me cousin,
Murmuring faint lullabies of eldest time,
Forgotten, and yet dumbly felt with thrills
Moving the lips, though fruitless of all words.

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And I have many a lifelong leafy friend,
Never estranged nor careful of my soul,
That knows I hate the axe, and welcomes me
Within his tent as if I were a bird,
Or other free companion of the earth,
Yet undegenerate to the shifts of men.
Among them one, an ancient willow, spreads
Eight balanced limbs, springing at once all round
His deep-ridged trunk with upward slant diverse,
In outline like enormous beaker, fit
For hand of Jotun, where mid snow and mist
He holds unwieldy revel. This tree, spared,
I know not by what grace, — for in the blood
Of our New World subduers lingers yet
Hereditary feud with trees, they being
(They and the red-man most) our fathers' foes, —
Is one of six, a willow Pleiades,
The seventh fallen, that lean along the brink
Where the steep upland dips into the marsh,
Their roots, like molten metal cooled in flowing,
Stiffened in coils and runnels down the bank.
The friend of all the winds, wide-armed he towers
And glints his steely aglets in the sun,
Or whitens fitfully with sudden bloom
Of leaves breeze-lifted, much as when a shoal
Of devious minnows wheel from where a pike
Lurks balanced 'neath the lily-pads, and whirl
A rood of silver bellies to the day.

Alas! no acorn from the British oak
'Neath which slim fairies tripping wrought those rings

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Of greenest emerald, wherewith fireside life
Did with the invisible spirit of Nature wed,
Was ever planted here! No darnel fancy
Might choke one useful blade in Puritan fields;
With horn and hoof the good old Devil came,
The witch's broomstick was not contraband,
But all that superstition had of fair,
Or piety of native sweet, was doomed.
And if there be who nurse unholy faiths,
Fearing their god as if he were a wolf
That snuffed round every home and was not seen,
There should be some to watch and keep alive
All beautiful beliefs. And such was that, —
By solitary shepherd first surmised
Under Thessalian oaks, loved by some maid
Of royal stirp, that silent came and vanished,
As near her nest the hermit thrush, nor dared
Confess a mortal name, — that faith which gave
A Hamadryad to each tree; and I
Will hold it true that in this willow dwells
The open-handed spirit, frank and blithe,
Of ancient Hospitality, long since,
With ceremonious thrift, bowed out of doors.

In June 't is good to lie beneath a tree
While the blithe season comforts every sense,
Steeps all the brain in rest, and heals the heart,
Brimming it o'er with sweetness unawares,
Fragrant and silent as that rosy snow
Wherewith the pitying apple-tree fills up
And tenderly lines some last-year robin's nest.
There muse I of old times, old hopes, old friends, —

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Old friends! The writing of those words has borne
My fancy backward to the gracious past,
The generous past, when all was possible,
For all was then untried; the years between
Have taught some sweet, some bitter lessons, none
Wiser than this, — to spend in all things else,
But of old friends to be most miserly.
Each year to ancient friendships adds a ring,
As to an oak, and precious more and more,
Without deservingness or help of ours,
They grow, and, silent, wider spread, each year,
Their unbought ring of shelter or of shade.
Sacred to me the lichens on the bark,
Which Nature's milliners would scrape away;
Most dear and sacred every withered limb!
'T is good to set them early, for our faith
Pines as we age, and, after wrinkles come,
Few plant, but water dead ones with vain tears.

This willow is as old to me as life;
And under it full often have I stretched,
Feeling the warm earth like a thing alive,
And gathering virtue in at every pore
Till it possessed me wholly, and thought ceased,
Or was transfused in something to which thought
Is coarse and dull of sense. Myself was lost,
Gone from me like an ache, and what remained
Become a part of the universal joy.
My soul went forth, and, mingling with the tree,
Danced in the leaves; or, floating in the cloud,
Saw its white double in the stream below;
Or else, sublimed to purer ecstasy,

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Dilated in the broad blue over all.
I was the wind that dappled the lush grass,
The tide that crept with coolness to its roots,
The thin-winged swallow skating on the air;
The life that gladdened everything was mine.
Was I then truly all that I beheld?
Or is this stream of being but a glass
Where the mind sees its visionary self,
As, when the kingfisher flits o'er his bay,
Across the river's hollow heaven below
His picture flits, — another, yet the same?
But suddenly the sound of human voice
Or footfall, like the drop a chemist pours,
Doth in opacous cloud precipitate
The consciousness that seemed but now dissolved
Into an essence rarer than its own,
And I am narrowed to myself once more.

For here not long is solitude secure,
Nor Fantasy left vacant to her spell.
Here, sometimes, in this paradise of shade,
Rippled with western winds, the dusty Tramp,
Seeing the treeless causey burn beyond,
Halts to unroll his bundle of strange food
And munch an unearned meal. I cannot help
Liking this creature, lavish Summer's bedesman,
Who from the almshouse steals when nights grow warm,
Himself his large estate and only charge,
To be the guest of haystack or of hedge,
Nobly superior to the household gear
That forfeits us our privilege of nature

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I bait him with my match-box and my pouch,
Nor grudge the uncostly sympathy of smoke,
His equal now, divinely unemployed.
Some smack of Robin Hood is in the man,
Some secret league with wild wood-wandering things;
He is our ragged Duke, our barefoot Earl,
By right of birth exonerate from toil,
Who levies rent from us his tenants all,
And serves the state by merely being. Here
The Scissors-grinder, pausing, doffs his hat,
And lets the kind breeze, with its delicate fan,
Winnow the heat from out his dank gray hair, —
A grimy Ulysses, a much-wandered man,
Whose feet are known to all the populous ways,
And many men and manners he hath seen,
Not without fruit of solitary thought.
He, as the habit is of lonely men, —
Unused to try the temper of their mind
In fence with others, — positive and shy,
Yet knows to put an edge upon his speech,
Pithily Saxon in unwilling talk.
Him I entrap with my long-suffering knife,
And, while its poor blade hums away in sparks,
Sharpen my wit upon his gritty mind,
In motion set obsequious to his wheel,
And in its quality not much unlike.

Nor wants my tree more punctual visitors.
The children, they who are the only rich,
Creating for the moment, and possessing
Whate'er they choose to feign, — for still with them

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Kind Fancy plays the fairy godmother,
Strewing their lives with cheap material
For wingëd horses and Aladdin's lamps,
Pure elfin-gold, by manhood's touch profane
To dead leaves disenchanted, — long ago
Between the branches of the tree fixed seats,
Making an o'erturned box their table. Oft
The shrilling girls sit here between school hours,
And play at *What's my thought like?* while the boys,
With whom the age chivalric ever bides,
Pricked on by knightly spur of female eyes,
Climb high to swing and shout on perilous boughs,
Or, from the willow's armory equipped
With musket dumb, green banner, edgeless sword,
Make good the rampart of their tree-redoubt
'Gainst eager British storming from below,
And keep alive the tale of Bunker's Hill.

Here, too, the men that mend our village ways,
Vexing Macadam's ghost with pounded slate,
Their nooning take; much noisy talk they spend
On horses and their ills; and, as John Bull
Tells of Lord This or That, who was his friend,
So these make boast of intimacies long
With famous teams, and add large estimates,
By competition swelled from mouth to mouth,
Of how much they could draw, till one, ill pleased
To have his legend overbid, retorts:
"You take and stretch truck-horses in a string
From here to Long Wharf end, one thing I know,
Not heavy neither, they could never draw, —

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Ensign's long bow!" Then laughter loud and long.
So they in their leaf-shadowed microcosm
Image the larger world; for wheresoe'er
Ten men are gathered, the observant eye
Will find mankind in little, as the stars
Glide up and set, and all the heavens revolve
In the small welkin of a drop of dew.

I love to enter pleasure by a postern,
Not the broad popular gate that gulps the mob;
To find my theatres in roadside nooks,
Where men are actors, and suspect it not;
Where Nature all unconscious works her will,
And every passion moves with easy gait,
Unhampered by the buskin or the train.
Hating the crowd, where we gregarious men
Lead lonely lives, I love society,
Nor seldom find the best with simple souls
Unswerved by culture from their native bent,
The ground we meet on being primal man
And nearer the deep bases of our lives.

But oh, half heavenly, earthly half, my soul,
Canst thou from those late ecstasies descend,
Thy lips still wet with the miraculous wine
That transubstantiates all thy baser stuff
To such divinity that soul and sense,
Once more commingled in their source, are lost, —
Canst thou descend to quench a vulgar thirst
With the mere dregs and rinsings of the world?
Well, if my nature find her pleasure so,

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I am content, nor need to blush; I take
My little gift of being clean from God,
Not haggling for a better, holding it
Good as was ever any in the world,
My days as good and full of miracle.
I pluck my nutriment from any bush,
Finding out poison as the first men did
By tasting and then suffering, if I must.
Sometimes my bush burns, and sometimes it is
A leafless wilding shivering by the wall;
But I have known when winter barberries
Pricked the effeminate palate with surprise
Of savor whose mere harshness seemed divine.

Oh, benediction of the higher mood
And human-kindness of the lower! for both
I will be grateful while I live, nor question
The wisdom that hath made us what we are,
With such large range as from the alehouse bench
Can reach the stars and be with both at home.
They tell us we have fallen on prosy days,
Condemned to glean the leavings of earth's feast
Where gods and heroes took delight of old;
But though our lives, moving in one dull round
Of repetition infinite, become
Stale as a newspaper once read, and though
History herself, seen in her workshop, seem
To have lost the art that dyed those glorious panes,
Rich with memorial shapes of saint and sage,
That pave with splendor the Past's dusky aisles, —
Panes that enchant the light of common day
With colors costly as the blood of kings,

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Till with ideal hues it edge our thought, —
Yet while the world is left, while nature lasts,
And man the best of nature, there shall be
Somewhere contentment for these human hearts,
Some freshness, some unused material
For wonder and for song. I lose myself
In other ways where solemn guide-posts say,
This way to Knowledge, This way to Repose,
But here, here only, I am ne'er betrayed,
For every by-path leads me to my love.

God's passionless reformers, influences,
That purify and heal and are not seen,
Shall man say whence your virtue is, or how
Ye make medicinal the wayside weed?
I know that sunshine, through whatever rift
How shaped it matters not, upon my walls
Paints discs as perfect-rounded as its source,
And, like its antitype, the ray divine,
However finding entrance, perfect still,
Repeats the image unimpaired of God.

We, who by shipwreck only find the shores
Of divine wisdom, can but kneel at first;
Can but exult to feel beneath our feet,
That long stretched vainly down the yielding deeps,
The shock and sustenance of solid earth;
Inland afar we see what temples gleam
Through immemorial stems of sacred groves,
And we conjecture shining shapes therein;
Yet for a space we love to wander here
Among the shells and seaweed of the beach.

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So mused I once within my willow-tent
One brave June morning, when the bluff north-
west,
Thrusting aside a dank and snuffling day
That made us bitter at our neighbors' sins,
Brimmed the great cup of heaven with sparkling
cheer
And roared a lusty stave; the sliding Charles,
Blue toward the west, and bluer and more blue,
Living and lustrous as a woman's eyes
Look once and look no more, with southward curve
Ran crinkling sunniness, like Helen's hair
Glimpsed in Elysium, insubstantial gold;
From blossom-clouded orchards, far away
The bobolink tinkled; the deep meadows flowed
With multitudinous pulse of light and shade
Against the bases of the southern hills,
While here and there a drowsy island rick
Slept and its shadow slept; the wooden bridge
Thundered, and then was silent; on the roofs
The sun-warped shingles rippled with the heat;
Summer on field and hill, in heart and brain,
All life washed clean in this high tide of June.

DARA

When Persia's sceptre trembled in a hand
Wilted with harem-heats, and all the land
Was hovered over by those vulture ills
That snuff decaying empire from afar,
Then, with a nature balanced as a star,
Dara arose, a shepherd of the hills.

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He who had governed fleecy subjects well
Made his own village by the selfsame spell
Secure and quiet as a guarded fold;
Then, gathering strength by slow and wise degrees
Under his sway, to neighbor villages
Order returned, and faith and justice old.

Now when it fortuned that a king more wise
Endued the realm with brain and hands and eyes,
He sought on every side men brave and just;
And having heard our mountain shepherd's praise,
How he refilled the mould of elder days,
To Dara gave a satrapy in trust.

So Dara shepherded a province wide,
Nor in his viceroy's sceptre took more pride
Than in his crook before; but envy finds
More food in cities than on mountains bare;
And the frank sun of natures clear and rare
Breeds poisonous fogs in low and marish minds.

Soon it was hissed into the royal ear,
That, though wise Dara's province, year by year,
Like a great sponge, sucked wealth and plenty up,
Yet, when he squeezed it at the king's behest,
Some yellow drops, more rich than all the rest,
Went to the filling of his private cup.

For proof, they said, that, wheresoe'er he went,
A chest, beneath whose weight the camel bent,
Went with him; and no mortal eye had seen
What was therein, save only Dara's own;

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But, when 't was opened, all his tent was known
To glow and lighten with heaped jewels' sheen.

The King set forth for Dara's province straight;
There, as was fit, outside the city's gate,
The viceroy met him with a stately train,
And there, with archers circled, close at hand,
A camel with the chest was seen to stand:
The King's brow reddened, for the guilt was plain.

"Open me here," he cried, "this treasure-chest!"
'T was done; and only a worn shepherd's vest
Was found therein. Some blushed and hung the head;
Not Dara; open as the sky's blue roof
He stood, and "O my lord, behold the proof
That I was faithful to my trust," he said.

"To govern men, lo all the spell I had!
My soul in these rude vestments ever clad
Still to the unstained past kept true and leal,
Still on these plains could breathe her mountain air,
And fortune's heaviest gifts serenely bear,
Which bend men from their truth and make them reel.

"For ruling wisely I should have small skill,
Were I not lord of simple Dara still;
That sceptre kept, I could not lose my way."
Strange dew in royal eyes grew round and bright,

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And strained the throbbing lids; before 't was night
Two added provinces blest Dara's sway.

THE FIRST SNOW-FALL

THE snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
Came Chanticleer's muffled crow,
The stiff rails softened to swan's-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn
Where a little headstone stood;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

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Up spoke our own little Mabel,
  Saying, "Father, who makes it snow?"
And I told of the good All-father
  Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
  And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
  When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
  That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
  The scar that renewed our woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
  "The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
  Alone can make it fall!"

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;
  And she, kissing back, could not know
That *my* kiss was given to her sister,
  Folded close under deepening snow.

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THE SINGING LEAVES

A BALLAD

I.

"WHAT fairings will ye that I bring?"
Said the King to his daughters three;
"For I to Vanity Fair am boun,
Now say what shall they be?"

Then up and spake the eldest daughter,
That lady tall and grand:
"Oh, bring me pearls and diamonds great,
And gold rings for my hand."

Thereafter spake the second daughter,
That was both white and red:
"For me bring silks that will stand alone,
And a gold comb for my head."

Then came the turn of the least daughter,
That was whiter than thistle-down,
And among the gold of her blithesome hair
Dim shone the golden crown.

"There came a bird this morning,
And sang 'neath my bower eaves,
Till I dreamed, as his music made me,
'Ask thou for the Singing Leaves.'"

Then the brow of the King swelled crimson
With a flush of angry scorn:

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"Well have ye spoken, my two eldest,
And chosen as ye were born;

"But she, like a thing of peasant race,
That is happy binding the sheaves;"
Then he saw her dead mother in her face,
And said, "Thou shalt have thy leaves."

II.

He mounted and rode three days and nights
Till he came to Vanity Fair,
And 't was easy to buy the gems and the silk,
But no Singing Leaves were there.

Then deep in the greenwood rode he,
And asked of every tree,
"Oh, if you have ever a Singing Leaf,
I pray you give it me!"

But the trees all kept their counsel,
And never a word said they,
Only there sighed from the pine-tops
A music of seas far away.

Only the pattering aspen
Made a sound of growing rain,
That fell ever faster and faster,
Then faltered to silence again

"Oh, where shall I find a little foot-page
That would win both hose and shoon,
And will bring to me the Singing Leaves
If they grow under the moon?"

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Then lightly turned him Walter the page,
By the stirrup as he ran:
"Now pledge you me the truesome word
Of a king and gentleman,

"That you will give me the first, first thing
You meet at your castle-gate,
And the Princess shall get the Singing Leaves,
Or mine be a traitor's fate."

The King's head dropt upon his breast
A moment, as it might be;
'T will be my dog, he thought, and said,
"My faith I plight to thee."

Then Walter took from next his heart
A packet small and thin,
"Now give you this to the Princess Anne,
The Singing Leaves are therein."

III.

As the King rode in at his castle-gate,
A maiden to meet him ran,
And "Welcome, father!" she laughed and cried
Together, the Princess Anne.

"Lo, here the Singing Leaves," quoth he,
"And woe, but they cost me dear!"
She took the packet, and the smile
Deepened down beneath the tear.

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It deepened down till it reached her heart,
And then gushed up again,
And lighted her tears as the sudden sun
Transfigures the summer rain.

And the first Leaf, when it was opened,
Sang: "I am Walter the page,
And the songs I sing 'neath thy window
Are my only heritage."

And the second Leaf sang: "But in the land
That is neither on earth nor sea,
My lute and I are lords of more
Than thrice this kingdom's fee."

And the third Leaf sang, "Be mine! Be mine!"
And ever it sang, "Be mine!"
Then sweeter it sang and ever sweeter,
And said, "I am thine, thine, thine!"

At the first Leaf she grew pale enough,
At the second she turned aside,
At the third, 't was as if a lily flushed
With a rose's red heart's tide.

"Good counsel gave the bird," said she,
"I have my hope thrice o'er,
For they sing to my very heart," she said,
"And it sings to them evermore."

She brought to him her beauty and truth,
But and broad earldoms three,

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And he made her queen of the broader lands
He held of his lute in fee.

SEAWEED

Not always unimpeded can I pray,
Nor, pitying saint, thine intercession claim;
Too closely clings the burden of the day,
And all the mint and anise that I pay
But swells my debt and deepens my self-blame.

Shall I less patience have than Thou, who know
That Thou revisit'st all who wait for thee,
Nor only fill'st the unsounded deeps below,
But dost refresh with punctual overflow
The rifts where unregarded mosses be?

The drooping seaweed hears, in night abyssed,
Far and more far the wave's receding shocks,
Nor doubts, for all the darkness and the mist,
That the pale shepherdess will keep her tryst,
And shoreward lead again her foam-fleeced flocks.

For the same wave that rims the Carib shore
With momentary brede of pearl and gold,
Goes hurrying thence to gladden with its roar
Lorn weeds bound fast on rocks of Labrador,
By love divine on one sweet errand rolled.

And, though Thy healing waters far withdraw,
I, too, can wait and feed on hope of Thee

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And of the dear recurrence of Thy law,
Sure that the parting grace my morning saw
Abides its time to come in search of me.

THE FINDING OF THE LYRE

THERE lay upon the ocean's shore
What once a tortoise served to cover;
A year and more, with rush and roar,
The surf had rolled it over,
Had played with it, and flung it by,
As wind and weather might decide it,
Then tossed it high where sand-drifts dry
Cheap burial might provide it.

It rested there to bleach or tan,
The rains had soaked, the suns had burned it;
With many a ban the fisherman
Had stumbled o'er and spurned it;
And there the fisher-girl would stay,
Conjecturing with her brother
How in their play the poor estray
Might serve some use or other.

So there it lay, through wet and dry
As empty as the last new sonnet,
Till by and by came Mercury,
And, having mused upon it,
"Why, here," cried he, "the thing of things
In shape, material, and dimension!

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Give it but strings, and, lo, it sings,
A wonderful invention!"

So said, so done; the chords he strained,
And, as his fingers o'er them hovered,
The shell disdained a soul had gained,
The lyre had been discovered.
O empty world that round us lies,
Dead shell, of soul and thought forsaken,
Brought we but eyes like Mercury's,
In thee what songs should waken!

NEW-YEAR'S EVE, 1850

THIS is the midnight of the century, — hark!
Through aisle and arch of Godminster have gone
Twelve throbs that tolled the zenith of the dark,
And mornward now the starry hands move on;
"Mornward!" the angelic watchers say,
"Passed is the sorest trial;
No plot of man can stay
The hand upon the dial;
Night is the dark stem of the lily Day."

If we, who watched in valleys here below,
Toward streaks, misdeemed of morn, our faces turned
When volcan glares set all the east aglow,
We are not poorer that we wept and yearned;
Though earth swing wide from God's intent,
And though no man nor nation

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Will move with full consent
In heavenly gravitation,
Yet by one Sun is every orbit bent.

FOR AN AUTOGRAPH

THOUGH old the thought and oft exprest,
'T is his at last who says it best, —
I'll try my fortune with the rest.

Life is a leaf of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.

"Lo, time and space enough," we cry,
"To write an epic!" so we try
Our nibs upon the edge, and die.

Muse not which way the pen to hold,
Luck hates the slow and loves the bold,
Soon come the darkness and the cold.

Greatly begin! though thou have time
But for a line, be that sublime, —
Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

Ah, with what lofty hope we came!
But we forget it, dream of fame,
And scrawl, as I do here, a name.

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AL FRESCO

THE dandelions and buttercups
Gild all the lawn; the drowsy bee
Stumbles among the clover-tops,
And summer sweetens all but me:
Away, unfruitful lore of books,
For whose vain idiom we reject
The soul's more native dialect,
Aliens among the birds and brooks,
Dull to interpret or conceive
What gospels lost the woods retrieve!
Away, ye critics, city-bred,
Who springes set of thus and so,
And in the first man's footsteps tread,
Like those who toil through drifted snow!
Away, my poets, whose sweet spell
Can make a garden of a cell!
I need ye not, for I to-day
Will make one long sweet verse of play.

Snap, chord of manhood's tenser strain!
To-day I will be a boy again;
The mind's pursuing element,
Like a bow slackened and unbent,
In some dark corner shall be leant.
The robin sings, as of old, from the limb!
The cat-bird croons in the lilac-bush!
Through the dim arbor, himself more dim,
Silently hops the hermit-thrush,
The withered leaves keep dumb for him;

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The irreverent buccaneering bee
Hath stormed and rifled the nunnery
Of the lily, and scattered the sacred floor
With haste-dropt gold from shrine to door;
There, as of yore,
The rich, milk-tingeing buttercup
Its tiny polished urn holds up,
Filled with ripe summer to the edge,
The sun in his own wine to pledge;
And our tall elm, this hundredth year
Doge of our leafy Venice here,
Who, with an annual ring, doth wed
The blue Adriatic overhead,
Shadows with his palatial mass
The deep canals of flowing grass.

O unestrangëd birds and bees!
O face of Nature always true!
O never-unsympathizing trees!
O never-rejecting roof of blue,
Whose rash disherison never falls
On us unthinking prodigals,
Yet who convictest all our ill,
So grand and unappeasable!
Methinks my heart from each of these
Plucks part of childhood back again,
Long there imprisoned, as the breeze
Doth every hidden odor seize
Of wood and water, hill and plain;
Once more am I admitted peer
In the upper house of Nature here,
And feel through all my pulses run
The royal blood of wind and sun.

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Upon these elm-arched solitudes
No hum of neighbor toil intrudes;
The only hammer that I hear
Is wielded by the woodpecker,
The single noisy calling his
In all our leaf-hid Sybaris;
The good old time, close-hidden here,
Persists, a loyal cavalier,
While Roundheads prim, with point of fox,
Probe wainscot-chink and empty box;
Here no hoarse-voiced iconoclast
Insults thy statues, royal Past;
Myself too prone the axe to wield,
I touch the silver side of the shield
With lance reversed, and challenge peace,
A willing convert of the trees.

How chanced it that so long I tost
A cable's length from this rich coast,
With foolish anchors hugging close
The beckoning weeds and lazy ooze,
Nor had the wit to wreck before
On this enchanted island's shore,
Whither the current of the sea,
With wiser drift, persuaded me?

Oh, might we but of such rare days
Build up the spirit's dwelling-place!
A temple of so Parian stone
Would brook a marble god alone,
The statue of a perfect life,
Far-shrined from earth's bestaining strife.

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Alas! though such felicity
In our vext world here may not be,
Yet, as sometimes the peasant's hut
Shows stones which old religion cut
With text inspired, or mystic sign
Of the Eternal and Divine,
Torn from the consecration deep
Of some fallen nunnery's mossy sleep,
So, from the ruins of this day
Crumbling in golden dust away,
The soul one gracious block may draw,
Carved with some fragment of the law,
Which, set in life's prosaic wall,
Old benedictions may recall,
And lure some nunlike thoughts to take
Their dwelling here for memory's sake.

MASACCIO

IN THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

He came to Florence long ago,
And painted here these walls, that shone
For Raphael and for Angelo,
With secrets deeper than his own,
Then shrank into the dark again,
And died, we know not how or when.

The shadows deepened, and I turned
Half sadly from the fresco grand;
"And is this," mused I, "all ye earned,

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High-vaulted brain and cunning hand,
That ye to greater men could teach
The skill yourselves could never reach?"

"And who were they," I mused, "that wrought
Through pathless wilds, with labor long,
The highways of our daily thought?
Who reared those towers of earliest song
That lift us from the crowd to peace
Remote in sunny silences?"

Out clanged the Ave Mary bells,
And to my heart this message came:
Each clamorous throat among them tells
What strong-souled martyrs died in flame
To make it possible that thou
Shouldst here with brother sinners bow.

Thoughts that great hearts once broke for, we
Breathe cheaply in the common air;
The dust we trample heedlessly
Throbbed once in saints and heroes rare,
Who perished, opening for their race
New pathways to the commonplace.

Henceforth, when rings the health to those
Who live in story and in song,
O nameless dead, that now repose
Safe in Oblivion's chambers strong,
One cup of recognition true
Shall silently be drained to you!

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WITHOUT AND WITHIN

My coachman, in the moonlight there,
  Looks through the side-light of the door;
I hear him with his brethren swear,
  As I could do, — but only more.

Flattening his nose against the pane,
  He envies me my brilliant lot,
Breathes on his aching fists in vain,
  And dooms me to a place more hot.

He sees me in to supper go,
  A silken wonder by my side,
Bare arms, bare shoulders, and a row
  Of flounces, for the door too wide.

He thinks how happy is my arm
  'Neath its white-gloved and jewelled load;
And wishes me some dreadful harm,
  Hearing the merry corks explode.

Meanwhile I inly curse the bore
  Of hunting still the same old coon,
And envy him, outside the door,
  In golden quiets of the moon.

The winter wind is not so cold
  As the bright smile he sees me win,
Nor the host's oldest wine so old
  As our poor gabble sour and thin.

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I envy him the ungyved prance
With which his freezing feet he warms,
And drag my lady's-chains and dance
The galley-slave of dreary forms.

Oh, could he have my share of din,
And I his quiet! — past a doubt
'T would still be one man bored within,
And just another bored without.

Nay, when, once paid my mortal fee,
Some idler on my headstone grim
Traces the moss-blurred name, will he
Think me the happier, or I him?

GODMINSTER CHIMES

WRITTEN IN AID OF A CHIME OF BELLS FOR CHRIST CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE.

GODMINSTER? Is it Fancy's play?
I know not, but the word
Sings in my heart, nor can I say
Whether 't was dreamed or heard;
Yet fragrant in my mind it clings
As blossoms after rain,
And builds of half-remembered things
This vision in my brain.

Through aisles of long-drawn centuries
My spirit walks in thought,

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And to that symbol lifts its eyes
Which God's own pity wrought;
From Calvary shines the altar's gleam,
The Church's East is there,
The Ages one great minster seem,
That throbs with praise and prayer.

And all the way from Calvary down
The carven pavement shows
Their graves who won the martyr's crown
And safe in God repose;
The saints of many a warring creed
Who now in heaven have learned
That all paths to the Father lead
Where Self the feet have spurned.

And, as the mystic aisles I pace,
By aureoled workmen built,
Lives ending at the Cross I trace
Alike through grace and guilt;
One Mary bathes the blessed feet
With ointment from her eyes,
With spikenard one, and both are sweet,
For both are sacrifice.

Moravian hymn and Roman chant
In one devotion blend,
To speak the soul's eternal want
Of Him, the inmost friend;
One prayer soars cleansed with martyr fire,
One choked with sinner's tears,
In heaven both meet in one desire,
And God one music hears.

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Whilst thus I dream, the bells clash out
  Upon the Sabbath air,
Each seems a hostile faith to shout,
  A selfish form of prayer;
My dream is shattered, yet who knows
  But in that heaven so near
These discords find harmonious close
  In God's atoning ear?

O chime of sweet Saint Charity,
  Peal soon that Easter morn
When Christ for all shall risen be,
  And in all hearts new-born!
That Pentecost when utterance clear
  To all men shall be given,
When all shall say *My Brother* here,
  And hear *My Son* in heaven!

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

WHO hath not been a poet? Who hath not,
With life's new quiver full of wingëd years,
Shot at a venture, and then, following on,
Stood doubtful at the Parting of the Ways?

There once I stood in dream, and as I paused,
Looking this way and that, came forth to me
The figure of a woman veiled, that said,
"My name is Duty, turn and follow me;"
Something there was that chilled me in her voice;
I felt Youth's hand grow slack and cold in mine,

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As if to be withdrawn, and I exclaimed:
"Oh, leave the hot wild heart within my breast!
Duty comes soon enough, too soon comes Death;
This slippery globe of life whirls of itself,
Hasting our youth away into the dark;
These senses, quivering with electric heats,
Too soon will show, like nests on wintry boughs
Obtrusive emptiness, too palpable wreck,
Which whistling north-winds line with downy snow
Sometimes, or fringe with foliaged rime, in vain,
Thither the singing birds no more return."

Then glowed to me a maiden from the left,
With bosom half disclosed, and naked arms
More white and undulant than necks of swans;
And all before her steps an influence ran
Warm as the whispering South that opens buds
And swells the laggard sails of Northern May.
"I am called Pleasure, come with me!" she said.
Then laughed, and shook out sunshine from her hair,
Nor only that, but, so it seemed, shook out
All memory too, and all the moonlit past,
Old loves, old aspirations, and old dreams,
More beautiful for being old and gone.

So we two went together; downward sloped
The path through yellow meads, or so I dreamed,
Yellow with sunshine and young green, but I
Saw naught nor heard, shut up in one close joy;
I only felt the hand within my own,
Transmuting all my blood to golden fire,
Dissolving all my brain in throbbing mist.

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Suddenly shrank the hand; suddenly burst
A cry that split the torpor of my brain,
And as the first sharp thrust of lightning loosens
From the heaped cloud its rain, loosened my sense:
"Save me!" it thrilled; "oh, hide me! there is
Death!
Death the divider, the unmerciful,
That digs his pitfalls under Love and Youth,
And covers Beauty up in the cold ground;
Horrible Death! bringer of endless dark;
Let him not see me! hide me in thy breast!"
Thereat I strove to clasp her, but my arms
Met only what slipped crumbling down, and fell,
A handful of gray ashes, at my feet.

I would have fled, I would have followed back
That pleasant path we came, but all was changed;
Rocky the way, abrupt, and hard to find;
Yet I toiled on, and, toiling on, I thought,
"That way lies Youth, and Wisdom, and all Good;
For only by unlearning Wisdom comes
And climbing backward to diviner Youth;
What the world teaches profits to the world,
What the soul teaches profits to the soul,
Which then first stands erect with Godward face,
When she lets fall her pack of withered facts,
The gleanings of the outward eye and ear,
And looks and listens with her finer sense;
Nor Truth nor Knowledge cometh from without."

After long, weary days I stood again
And waited at the Parting of the Ways;

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Again the figure of a woman veiled
Stood forth and beckoned, and I followed now:
Down to no bower of roses led the path,
But through the streets of towns where chattering Cold
Hewed wood for fires whose glow was owned and fenced,
Where Nakedness wove garments of warm wool
Not for itself; — or through the fields it led
Where Hunger reaped the unattainable grain,
Where Idleness enforced saw idle lands,
Leagues of unpeopled soil, the common earth,
Walled round with paper against God and Man.
"I cannot look," I groaned, "at only these;
The heart grows hardened with perpetual wont,
And palters with a feigned necessity,
Bargaining with itself to be content;
Let me behold thy face."
The Form replied:
"Men follow Duty, never overtake;
Duty nor lifts her veil nor looks behind."
But, as she spake, a loosened lock of hair
Slipped from beneath her hood, and I, who looked
To see it gray and thin, saw amplest gold;
Not that dull metal dug from sordid earth,
But such as the retiring sunset flood
Leaves heaped on bays and capes of island cloud.
"O Guide divine," I prayed, "although not yet
I may repair the virtue which I feel
Gone out at touch of untuned things and foul
With draughts of Beauty, yet declare how soon!"

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"Faithless and faint of heart," the voice returned,
"Thou seest no beauty save thou make it first;
Man, Woman, Nature, each is but a glass
Where the soul sees the image of herself,
Visible echoes, offsprings of herself.
But, since thou need'st assurance of how soon,
Wait till that angel comes who opens all,
The reconciler, he who lifts the veil,
The reuniter, the rest-bringer, Death."

I waited, and methought he came; but how,
Or in what shape, I doubted, for no sign,
By touch or mark, he gave me as he passed:
Only I knew a lily that I held
Snapt short below the head and shrivelled up;
Then turned my Guide and looked at me unveiled,
And I beheld no face of matron stern,
But that enchantment I had followed erst,
Only more fair, more clear to eye and brain,
Heightened and chastened by a household charm;
She smiled, and "Which is fairer," said her eyes,
"The hag's unreal Florimel or mine?"

ALADDIN

WHEN I was a beggarly boy,
And lived in a cellar damp,
I had not a friend nor a toy,
But I had Aladdin's lamp;
When I could not sleep for the cold,
I had fire enough in my brain,

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And builded, with roofs of gold,
My beautiful castles in Spain!

Since then I have toiled day and night,
I have money and power good store,
But I 'd give all my lamps of silver bright
For the one that is mine no more;
Take, Fortune, whatever you choose,
You gave, and may snatch again;
I have nothing 't would pain me to lose,
For I own no more castles in Spain!

AN INVITATION

TO J. F. H.

NINE years have slipt like hour-glass sand
From life's still-emptying globe away,
Since last, dear friend, I clasped your hand,
And stood upon the impoverished land,
Watching the steamer down the bay.

I held the token which you gave,
While slowly the smoke-pennon curled
O'er the vague rim 'tween sky and wave,
And shut the distance like a grave,
Leaving me in the colder world;

The old, worn world of hurry and heat,
The young, fresh world of thought and scope;
While you, where beckoning billows fleet

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Climb far sky-beaches still and sweet,
Sank wavering down the ocean-slope.

You sought the new world in the old,
I found the old world in the new,
All that our human hearts can hold,
The inward world of deathless mould,
The same that Father Adam knew.

He needs no ship to cross the tide,
Who, in the lives about him, sees
Fair window-prospects opening wide
O'er history's fields on every side,
To Ind and Egypt, Rome and Greece.

Whatever moulds of various brain
E'er shaped the world to weal or woe,
Whatever empires' wax and wane,
To him that hath not eyes in vain,
Our village-microcosm can show.

Come back our ancient walks to tread,
Dear haunts of lost or scattered friends,
Old Harvard's scholar-factories red,
Where song and smoke and laughter sped
The nights to proctor-haunted ends.

Constant are all our former loves,
Unchanged the icehouse-girdled pond,
Its hemlock glooms, its shadowy coves,
Where floats the coot and never moves,
Its slopes of long-tamed green beyond.

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Our old familiars are not laid,
Though snapt our wands and sunk our books;
They beckon, not to be gainsaid,
Where, round broad meads that mowers wade,
The Charles his steel-blue sickle crooks.

Where, as the cloudbergs eastward blow,
From glow to gloom the hillsides shift
Their plumps of orchard-trees arow,
Their lakes of rye that wave and flow,
Their snowy whiteweed's summer drift.

There have we watched the West unfurl
A cloud Byzantium newly born,
With flickering spires and domes of pearl,
And vapory surfs that crowd and curl
Into the sunset's Golden Horn.

There, as the flaming occident
Burned slowly down to ashes gray,
Night pitched o'erhead her silent tent,
And glimmering gold from Hesper sprent
Upon the darkened river lay,

Where a twin sky but just before
Deepened, and double swallows skimmed,
And from a visionary shore
Hung visioned trees, that more and more
Grew dusk as those above were dimmed.

Then eastward saw we slowly grow
Clear-edged the lines of roof and spire,

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While great elm-masses blacken slow,
And linden-ricks their round heads show
Against a flush of widening fire.

Doubtful at first and far away,
The moon-flood creeps more wide and wide;
Up a ridged beach of cloudy gray,
Curved round the east as round a bay,
It slips and spreads its gradual tide.

Then suddenly, in lurid mood,
The disk looms large o'er town and field
As upon Adam, red like blood,
'Tween him and Eden's happy wood,
Glared the commissioned angel's shield.

Or let us seek the seaside, there
To wander idly as we list,
Whether, on rocky headlands bare,
Sharp cedar-horns, like breakers, tear
The trailing fringes of gray mist,

Or whether, under skies full flown,
The brightening surfs, with foamy din,
Their breeze-caught forelocks backward blown,
Against the beach's yellow zone
Curl slow, and plunge forever in.

And, as we watch those canvas towers
That lean along the horizon's rim,
"Sail on," I 'll say; "may sunniest hours
Convoy you from this land of ours,
Since from my side you bear not him!"

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For years thrice three, wise Horace said,
A poem rare let silence bind;
And love may ripen in the shade,
Like ours, for nine long seasons laid
In deepest arches of the mind.

Come back! Not ours the Old World's good,
The Old World's ill, thank God, not ours;
But here, far better understood,
The days enforce our native mood,
And challenge all our manlier powers.

Kindlier to me the place of birth
That first my tottering footsteps trod;
There may be fairer spots of earth,
But all their glories are not worth
The virtue in the native sod.

Thence climbs an influence more benign
Through pulse and nerve, through heart and brain;
Sacred to me those fibres fine
That first clasped earth. Oh, ne'er be mine
The alien sun and alien rain!

These nourish not like homelier glows
Or waterings of familiar skies,
And nature fairer blooms bestows
On the heaped hush of wintry snows,
In pastures dear to childhood's eyes,

Than where Italian earth receives
The partial sunshine's ampler boons,
Where vines carve friezes 'neath the eaves,

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And, in dark firmaments of leaves,
The orange lifts its golden moons.

THE NOMADES

WHAT Nature makes in any mood
To me is warranted for good,
Though long before I learned to see
She did not set us moral theses,
And scorned to have her sweet caprices
Strait-waistcoated in you or me.

I, who take root and firmly cling,
Thought fixedness the only thing;
Why Nature made the butterflies,
(Those dreams of wings that float and hover
At noon the slumberous poppies over,)
Was something hidden from mine eyes,

Till once, upon a rock's brown bosom,
Bright as a thorny cactus-blossom,
I saw a butterfly at rest;
Then first of both I felt the beauty;
The airy whim, the grim-set duty,
Each from the other took its best.

Clearer it grew than winter sky
That Nature still had reasons why;
And, shifting sudden as a breeze,
My fancy found no satisfaction,
No antithetic sweet attraction,
So great as in the Nomades.

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Scythians, with Nature not at strife,
Light Arabs of our complex life,
They build no houses, plant no mills
To utilize Time's sliding river,
Content that it flow waste forever,
If they, like it, may have their wills.

An hour they pitch their shifting tents
In thoughts, in feelings, and events;
Beneath the palm-trees, on the grass,
They sing, they dance, make love, and chatter,
Vex the grim temples with their clatter,
And make Truth's fount their looking-glass.

A picnic life; from love to love,
From faith to faith they lightly move,
And yet, hard-eyed philosopher,
The flightiest maid that ever hovered
To me your thought-webs fine discovered,
No lens to see them through like her.

So witchingly her finger-tips
To Wisdom, as away she trips,
She kisses, waves such sweet farewells
To Duty, as she laughs "To-morrow!"
That both from that mad contrast borrow
A perfectness found nowhere else.

The beach-bird on its pearly verge
Follows and flies the whispering surge,
While, in his tent, the rock-stayed shell
Awaits the flood's star-timed vibrations,

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And both, the flutter and the patience,
The sauntering poet loves them well.

Fulfil so much of God's decree
As works its problem out in thee,
Nor dream that in thy breast alone
The conscience of the changeful seasons,
The Will that in the planets reasons
With space-wide logic, has its throne.

Thy virtue makes not vice of mine,
Unlike, but none the less divine;
Thy toil adorns, not chides, my play;
Nature of sameness is so chary,
With such wild whim the freakish fairy
Picks presents for the christening-day.

SELF-STUDY

A PRESENCE both by night and day,
That made my life seem just begun,
Yet scarce a presence, rather say
The warning aureole of one.

And yet I felt it everywhere;
Walked I the woodland's aisles along,
It seemed to brush me with its hair;
Bathed I, I heard a mermaid's song.

How sweet it was! A buttercup
Could hold for me a day's delight,

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A bird could lift my fancy up
To ether free from cloud or blight.

Who was the nymph? Nay, I will see,
Methought, and I will know her near;
If such, divined, her charm can be,
Seen and possessed, how triply dear!

So every magic art I tried,
And spells as numberless as sand,
Until, one evening, by my side
I saw her glowing fulness stand.

I turned to clasp her, but "Farewell,"
Parting she sighed, "we meet no more;
Not by my hand the curtain fell
That leaves you conscious, wise, and poor.

"Since you have found me out, I go;
Another lover I must find,
Content his happiness to know,
Nor strive its secret to unwind."

PICTURES FROM APPLEDORE

I.

A HEAP of bare and splintery crags
Tumbled about by lightning and frost,
With rifts and chasms and storm-bleached jags,
That wait and growl for a ship to be lost;

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No island, but rather the skeleton
Of a wrecked and vengeance-smitten one,
Where, æons ago, with half-shut eye,
The sluggish saurian crawled to die,
Gasping under titanic ferns;
Ribs of rock that seaward jut,
Granite shoulders and boulders and snags,
Round which, though the winds in heaven be shut,
The nightmared ocean murmurs and yearns,
Welters, and swashes, and tosses, and turns,
And the dreary black seaweed lolls and wags;
Only rock from shore to shore,
Only a moan through the bleak clefts blown,
With sobs in the rifts where the coarse kelp shifts,
Falling and lifting, tossing and drifting,
And under all a deep, dull roar,
Dying and swelling, forevermore, —
Rock and moan and roar alone,
And the dread of some nameless thing unknown,
These make Appledore.

These make Appledore by night:
Then there are monsters left and right;
Every rock is a different monster;
All you have read of, fancied, dreamed,
When you waked at night because you screamed,
There they lie for half a mile,
Jumbled together in a pile,
And (though you know they never once stir)
If you look long, they seem to be moving
Just as plainly as plain can be,
Crushing and crowding, wading and shoving

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Out into the awful sea,
Where you can hear them snort and spout
With pauses between, as if they were listening,
Then tumult anon when the surf breaks glistening
In the blackness where they wallow about.

II.

All this you would scarcely comprehend,
Should you see the isle on a sunny day;
Then it is simple enough in its way, —
Two rocky bulges, one at each end,
With a smaller bulge and a hollow between;
Patches of whortleberry and bay;
Accidents of open green,
Sprinkled with loose slabs square and gray,
Like graveyards for ages deserted; a few
Unsocial thistles; an elder or two,
Foamed over with blossoms white as spray;
And on the whole island never a tree
Save a score of sumachs, high as your knee,
That crouch in hollows where they may,
(The cellars where once stood a village, men say,)
Huddling for warmth, and never grew
Tall enough for a peep at the sea;
A general dazzle of open blue;
A breeze always blowing and playing rat-tat
With the bow of the ribbon round your hat;
A score of sheep that do nothing but stare
Up or down at you everywhere;
Three or four cattle that chew the cud
Lying about in a listless despair;
A medrick that makes you look overhead

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With short, sharp scream, as he sights his prey,
And, dropping straight and swift as lead,
Splits the water with sudden thud; —
This is Appledore by day.

A common island, you will say;
But stay a moment: only climb
Up to the highest rock of the isle,
Stand there alone for a little while,
And with gentle approaches it grows sublime,
Dilating slowly as you win
A sense from the silence to take it in.
So wide the loneness, so lucid the air,
The granite beneath you so savagely bare,
You well might think you were looking down
From some sky-silenced mountain's crown,
Whose waist-belt of pines is wont to tear
Locks of wool from the topmost cloud.
Only be sure you go alone,
For Grandeur is inaccessibly proud,
And never yet has backward thrown
Her veil to feed the stare of a crowd;
To more than one was never shown
That awful front, nor is it fit
That she, Cothurnus-shod, stand bowed
Until the self-approving pit
Enjoy the gust of its own wit
In babbling plaudits cheaply loud;
She hides her mountains and her sea
From the harriers of scenery,
Who hunt down sunsets, and huddle and bay,
Mouthing and mumbling the dying day.

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Trust me, 't is something to be cast
Face to face with one's Self at last,
To be taken out of the fuss and strife,
The endless clatter of plate and knife,
The bore of books and the bores of the street,
From the singular mess we agree to call Life,
Where that is best which the most fools vote is,
And planted firm on one's own two feet
So nigh to the great warm heart of God,
You almost seem to feel it beat
Down from the sunshine and up from the sod;
To be compelled, as it were, to notice
All the beautiful changes and chances
Through which the landscape flits and glances,
And to see how the face of common day
Is written all over with tender histories,
When you study it that intenser way
In which a lover looks at his mistress.

Till now you dreamed not what could be done
With a bit of rock and a ray of sun;
But look, how fade the lights and shades
Of keen bare edge and crevice deep!
How doubtfully it fades and fades,
And glows again, yon craggy steep,
O'er which, through color's dreamiest grades,
The musing sunbeams pause and creep!
Now pink it blooms, now glimmers gray,
Now shadows to a filmy blue,
Tries one, tries all, and will not stay,
But flits from opal hue to hue,
And runs through every tenderest range

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Of change that seems not to be change,
So rare the sweep, so nice the art,
That lays no stress on any part,
But shifts and lingers and persuades;
So soft that sun-brush in the west,
That asks no costlier pigments' aids,
But mingling knobs, flaws, angles, dints,
Indifferent of worst or best,
Enchants the cliffs with wraiths and hints
And gracious preludings of tints,
Where all seems fixed, yet all evades,
And indefinably pervades
Perpetual movement with perpetual rest!

III.

Away northeast is Boone Island light;
You might mistake it for a ship,
Only it stands too plumb upright,
And like the others does not slip
Behind the sea's unsteady brink;
Though, if a cloud-shade chance to dip
Upon it a moment, 't will suddenly sink,
Levelled and lost in the darkened main,
Till the sun builds it suddenly up again,
As if with a rub of Aladdin's lamp.
On the mainland you see a misty camp
Of mountains pitched tumultuously:
That one looming so long and large
Is Saddleback, and that point you see
Over yon low and rounded marge,
Like the boss of a sleeping giant's targe
Laid over his breast, is Ossipee;

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That shadow there may be Kearsarge;
That must be Great Haystack; I love these names,
Wherewith the lonely farmer tames
Nature to mute companionship
With his own mind's domestic mood,
And strives the surly world to clip
In the arms of familiar habitude.
'T is well he could not contrive to make
A Saxon of Agamenticus:
He glowers there to the north of us,
Wrapt in his blanket of blue haze,
Unconvertibly savage, and scorns to take
The white man's baptism or his ways.
Him first on shore the coaster divines
Through the early gray, and sees him shake
The morning mist from his scalp-lock of pines;
Him first the skipper makes out in the west,
Ere the earliest sunstreak shoots tremulous,
Plashing with orange the palpitant lines
Of mutable billow, crest after crest,
And murmurs *Agamenticus!*
As if it were the name of a saint.
But is that a mountain playing cloud,
Or a cloud playing mountain, just there, so faint?
Look along over the low right shoulder
Of Agamenticus into that crowd
Of brassy thunderheads behind it;
Now you have caught it, but, ere you are older
By half an hour, you will lose it and find it
A score of times; while you look 't is gone,
And, just as you 've given it up, anon
It is there again, till your weary eyes

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Fancy they see it waver and rise,
With its brother clouds; it is Agiochook,
There if you seek not, and gone if you look,
Ninety miles off as the eagle flies.

But mountains make not all the shore
The mainland shows to Appledore;
Eight miles the heaving water spreads
To a long, low coast with beaches and heads
That run through unimagined mazes,
As the lights and shades and magical hazes
Put them away or bring them near,
Shimmering, sketched out for thirty miles
Between two capes that waver like threads,
And sink in the ocean, and reappear,
Crumbled and melted to little isles,
With filmy trees, that seem the mere
Half-fancies of drowsy atmosphere;
And see the beach there, where it is
Flat as a threshing-floor, beaten and packed
With the flashing flails of weariless seas,
How it lifts and looms to a precipice,
O'er whose square front, a dream, no more,
The steepened sand-stripes seem to pour,
A murmurless vision of cataract;
You almost fancy you hear a roar,
Fitful and faint from the distance wandering;
But 't is only the blind old ocean maundering,
Raking the shingle to and fro,
Aimlessly clutching and letting go
The kelp-haired sedges of Appledore,
Slipping down with a sleepy forgetting,

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And anon his ponderous shoulder setting,
With a deep, hoarse pant against Appledore.

IV.

Eastward as far as the eye can see,
Still eastward, eastward, endlessly,
The sparkle and tremor of purple sea
That rises before you, a flickering hill,
On and on to the shut of the sky,
And beyond, you fancy it sloping until
The same multitudinous throb and thrill
That vibrate under your dizzy eye
In ripples of orange and pink are sent
Where the poppied sails doze on the yard,
And the clumsy junk and proa lie
Sunk deep with precious woods and nard,
'Mid the palmy isles of the Orient.
Those leaning towers of clouded white
On the farthest brink of doubtful ocean,
That shorten and shorten out of sight,
Yet seem on the selfsame spot to stay,
Receding with a motionless motion,
Fading to dubious films of gray,
Lost, dimly found, then vanished wholly,
Will rise again, the great world under,
First films, then towers, then high-heaped clouds,
Whose nearing outlines sharpen slowly
Into tall ships with cobweb shrouds,
That fill long Mongol eyes with wonder,
Crushing the violet wave to spray
Past some low headland of Cathay; —
What was that sigh which seemed so near,

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Chilling your fancy to the core?
'T is only the sad old sea you hear,
That seems to seek forevermore
Something it cannot find, and so,
Sighing, seeks on, and tells its woe
To the pitiless breakers of Appledore.

v.

How looks Appledore in a storm?
I have seen it when its crags seemed frantic,
Butting against the mad Atlantic,
When surge on surge would heap enorme,
Cliffs of emerald topped with snow,
That lifted and lifted, and then let go
A great white avalanche of thunder,
A grinding, blinding, deafening ire
Monadnock might have trembled under;
And the island, whose rock-roots pierce below
To where they are warmed with the central fire,
You could feel its granite fibres racked,
As it seemed to plunge with a shudder and thrill
Right at the breast of the swooping hill,
And to rise again snorting a cataract
Of rage-froth from every cranny and ledge,
While the sea drew its breath in hoarse and deep,
And the next vast breaker curled its edge,
Gathering itself for a mightier leap.

North, east, and south there are reefs and breakers
You would never dream of in smooth weather,
That toss and gore the sea for acres,

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Bellowing and gnashing and snarling together;
Look northward, where Duck Island lies,
And over its crown you will see arise,
Against a background of slaty skies,
A row of pillars still and white,
That glimmer, and then are gone from sight,
As if the moon should suddenly kiss,
While you crossed the gusty desert by night,
The long colonnades of Persepolis;
Look southward for White Island light,
The lantern stands ninety feet o'er the tide;
There is first a half-mile of tumult and fight,
Of dash and roar and tumble and fright,
And surging bewilderment wild and wide,
Where the breakers struggle left and right,
Then a mile or more of rushing sea,
And then the lighthouse slim and lone;
And whenever the weight of ocean is thrown
Full and fair on White Island head,
A great mist-jotun you will see
Lifting himself up silently
High and huge o'er the lighthouse top,
With hands of wavering spray outspread,
Groping after the little tower,
That seems to shrink and shorten and cower,
Till the monster's arms of a sudden drop,
And silently and fruitlessly
He sinks back into the sea.

You, meanwhile, where drenched you stand,
Awaken once more to the rush and roar,
And on the rock-point tighten your hand,

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As you turn and see a valley deep,
That was not there a moment before,
Suck rattling down between you and a heap
Of toppling billow, whose instant fall
Must sink the whole island once for all,
Or watch the silenter, stealthier seas
Feeling their way to you more and more;
If they once should clutch you high as the knees,
They would whirl you down like a sprig of kelp,
Beyond all reach of hope or help; —
And such in a storm is Appledore.

VI.

'T is the sight of a lifetime to behold
The great shorn sun as you see it now,
Across eight miles of undulant gold
That widens landward, weltered and rolled,
With freaks of shadow and crimson stains;
To see the solid mountain brow
As it notches the disk, and gains and gains
Until there comes, you scarce know when,
A tremble of fire o'er the parted lips
Of cloud and mountain, which vanishes; then
From the body of day the sun-soul slips
And the face of earth darkens; but now the strips
Of western vapor, straight and thin,
From which the horizon's swervings win
A grace of contrast, take fire and burn
Like splinters of touchwood, whose edges a mould
Of ashes o'erfeathers; northward turn
For an instant, and let your eye grow cold
On Agamenticus, and when once more

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You look, 't is as if the land-breeze, growing,
From the smouldering brands the film were blowing,
And brightening them down to the very core;
Yet they momently cool and dampen and deaden,
The crimson turns golden, the gold turns leaden,
Hardening into one black bar
O'er which, from the hollow heaven afar,
Shoots a splinter of light like diamond,
Half seen, half fancied; by and by
Beyond whatever is most beyond
In the uttermost waste of desert sky,
Grows a star;
And over it, visible spirit of dew, —
Ah, stir not, speak not, hold your breath,
Or surely the miracle vanisheth, —
The new moon, tranced in unspeakable blue!
No frail illusion; this were true,
Rather, to call it the canoe
Hollowed out of a single pearl,
That floats us from the Present's whirl
Back to those beings which were ours,
When wishes were winged things like powers!
Call it not light, that mystery tender,
Which broods upon the brooding ocean,
That flush of ecstasied surrender
To indefinable emotion,
That glory, mellower than a mist
Of pearl dissolved with amethyst,
Which rims Square Rock, like what they paint
Of mitigated heavenly splendor
Round the stern forehead of a Saint!

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No more a vision, reddened, largened,
The moon dips toward her mountain nest,
And, fringing it with palest argent,
Slow sheathes herself behind the margent
Of that long cloud-bar in the West,
Whose nether edge, erelong, you see
The silvery chrism in turn anoint,
And then the tiniest rosy point
Touched doubtfully and timidly
Into the dark blue's chilly strip,
As some mute, wondering thing below,
Awakened by the thrilling glow,
Might, looking up, see Dian dip
One lucent foot's delaying tip
In Latmian fountains long ago.

Knew you what silence was before?
Here is no startle of dreaming bird
That sings in his sleep, or strives to sing;
Here is no sough of branches stirred,
Nor noise of any living thing,
Such as one hears by night on shore;
Only, now and then, a sigh,
With fickle intervals between,
Sometimes far, and sometimes nigh,
Such as Andromeda might have heard,
And fancied the huge sea-beast unseen
Turning in sleep; it is the sea
That welters and wavers uneasily
Round the lonely reefs of Appledore.

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THE WIND-HARP

I TREASURE in secret some long, fine hair
  Of tenderest brown, but so inwardly golden
I half used to fancy the sunshine there,
So shy, so shifting, so waywardly rare,
  Was only caught for the moment and holden
While I could say *Dearest!* and kiss it, and then
In pity let go to the summer again.

I twisted this magic in gossamer strings
  Over a wind-harp's Delphian hollow;
Then called to the idle breeze that swings
All day in the pine-tops, and clings, and sings
  'Mid the musical leaves, and said, "Oh, follow
The will of those tears that deepen my words,
And fly to my window to waken these chords."

So they trembled to life, and, doubtfully
  Feeling their way to my sense, sang, "Say whether
They sit all day by the greenwood tree,
The lover and loved, as it wont to be,
  When we —" But grief conquered, and all together
They swelled such weird murmur as haunts a shore
Of some planet dispeopled, — "Nevermore!"

Then from deep in the past, as seemed to me,
  The strings gathered sorrow and sang forsaken,
"One lover still waits 'neath the greenwood tree,

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But 't is dark," and they shuddered, " where lieth
she
Dark and cold! Forever must one be taken?"
But I groaned, " O harp of all ruth bereft,
This Scripture is sadder, — 'the other left'!"

There murmured, as if one strove to speak,
And tears came instead; then the sad tones
wandered
And faltered among the uncertain chords
In a troubled doubt between sorrow and words;
At last with themselves they questioned and
pondered,
" Hereafter? — who knoweth?" and so they sighed
Down the long steps that lead to silence and died.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN

SUMMER

THE little gate was reached at last,
Half hid in lilacs down the lane;
She pushed it wide, and, as she past,
A wistful look she backward cast,
And said, — " *Auf wiedersehen!*"

With hand on latch, a vision white
Lingered reluctant, and again
Half doubting if she did aright,
Soft as the dews that fell that night,
She said, — " *Auf wiedersehen!*"

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The lamp's clear gleam flits up the stair;
I linger in delicious pain;
Ah, in that chamber, whose rich air
To breathe in thought I scarcely dare,
Thinks she, — "*Auf wiedersehen?*" . . .

'T is thirteen years; once more I press
The turf that silences the lane;
I hear the rustle of her dress,
I smell the lilacs, and — ah, yes,
I hear "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

Sweet piece of bashful maiden art!
The English words had seemed too fain,
But these — they drew us heart to heart,
Yet held us tenderly apart;
She said, "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

PALINODE

AUTUMN

STILL thirteen years: 't is autumn now
On field and hill, in heart and brain;
The naked trees at evening sough;
The leaf to the forsaken bough
Sighs not, — "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

Two watched yon oriole's pendent dome,
That now is void, and dank with rain,
And one, — oh, hope more frail than foam!
The bird to his deserted home
Sings not, — "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

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The loath gate swings with rusty creak;
Once, parting there, we played at pain;
There came a parting, when the weak
And fading lips essayed to speak
Vainly, — "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

Somewhere is comfort, somewhere faith,
Though thou in outer dark remain;
One sweet sad voice ennobles death,
And still, for eighteen centuries saith
Softly, — "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

If earth another grave must bear,
Yet heaven hath won a sweeter strain,
And something whispers my despair,
That, from an orient chamber there,
Floats down, "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

AFTER THE BURIAL

YES, faith is a goodly anchor;
When skies are sweet as a psalm,
At the bows it lolls so stalwart,
In its bluff, broad-shouldered calm.

And when over breakers to leeward
The tattered surges are hurled,
It may keep our head to the tempest,
With its grip on the base of the world.

But, after the shipwreck, tell me
What help in its iron thews,

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Still true to the broken hawser,
Deep down among sea-weed and ooze?

In the breaking gulfs of sorrow,
When the helpless feet stretch out
And find in the deeps of darkness
No footing so solid as doubt,

Then better one spar of Memory,
One broken plank of the Past,
That our human heart may cling to,
Though hopeless of shore at last!

To the spirit its splendid conjectures,
To the flesh its sweet despair,
Its tears o'er the thin-worn locket
With its anguish of deathless hair!

Immortal? I feel it and know it,
Who doubts it of such as she?
But that is the pang's very secret, —
Immortal away from me.

There 's a narrow ridge in the graveyard
Would scarce stay a child in his race,
But to me and my thought it is wider
Than the star-sown vague of Space.

Your logic, my friend, is perfect,
Your moral most drearily true;
But, since the earth clashed on *her* coffin,
I keep hearing that, and not you.

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Console if you will, I can bear it;
'T is a well-meant alms of breath;
But not all the preaching since Adam
Has made Death other than Death.

It is pagan; but wait till you feel it, —
That jar of our earth, that dull shock
When the ploughshare of deeper passion
Tears down to our primitive rock.

Communion in spirit! Forgive me,
But I, who am earthy and weak,
Would give all my incomes from dreamland
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.

That little shoe in the corner,
So worn and wrinkled and brown,
With its emptiness confutes you,
And argues your wisdom down.

THE DEAD HOUSE

HERE once my step was quickened,
Here beckoned the opening door,
And welcome thrilled from the threshold
To the foot it had known before.

A glow came forth to meet me
From the flame that laughed in the grate,
And shadows adance on the ceiling,
Danced blither with mine for a mate.

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"I claim you, old friend," yawned the arm-chair,
"This corner, you know, is your seat;"
"Rest your slippers on me," beamed the fender,
"I brighten at touch of your feet."

"We know the practised finger,"
Said the books, "that seems like brain;"
And the shy page rustled the secret
It had kept till I came again.

Sang the pillow, "My down once quivered
On nightingales' throats that flew
Through moonlit gardens of Hafiz
To gather quaint dreams for you."

Ah me, where the Past sowed heart's-ease,
The Present plucks rue for us men!
I come back: that scar unhealing
Was not in the churchyard then.

But, I think, the house is unaltered,
I will go and beg to look
At the rooms that were once familiar
To my life as its bed to a brook.

Unaltered! Alas for the sameness
That makes the change but more!
'T is a dead man I see in the mirrors,
'T is his tread that chills the floor!

To learn such a simple lesson,
Need I go to Paris and Rome,

Digitized by Google

That the many make the household,
  But only one the home?

'T was just a womanly presence,
  An influence unexprest,
But a rose she had worn, on my gravesod
  Were more than long life with the rest!

'T was a smile, 't was a garment's rustle,
  'T was nothing that I can phrase,
But the whole dumb dwelling grew conscious,
  And put on her looks and ways.

Were it mine I would close the shutters,
  Like lids when the life is fled,
And the funeral fire should wind it,
  This corpse of a home that is dead.

For it died that autumn morning
  When she, its soul, was borne
To lie all dark on the hillside
  That looks over woodland and corn.

A MOOD

I GO to the ridge in the forest
I haunted in days gone by,
But thou, O Memory, pourest
No magical drop in mine eye,
Nor the gleam of the secret restorest
That hath faded from earth and sky:

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A Presence autumnal and sober
Invests every rock and tree,
And the aureole of October
Lights the maples, but darkens me.

Pine in the distance,
Patient through sun or rain,
Meeting with graceful persistence,
With yielding but rooted resistance,
The northwind's wrench and strain,
No memory of past existence
Brings thee pain;
Right for the zenith heading,
Friendly with heat or cold,
Thine arms to the influence spreading
Of the heavens, just from of old,
Thou only aspirest the more,
Unregretful the old leaves shedding
That fringed thee with music before,
And deeper thy roots embedding
In the grace and the beauty of yore;
Thou sigh'st not, "Alas, I am older,
The green of last summer is sear!"
But loftier, hopefuller, bolder,
Winnest broader horizons each year.

To me 't is not cheer thou art singing:
There 's a sound of the sea,
O mournful tree,
In thy boughs forever clinging,
And the far-off roar
Of waves on the shore
A shattered vessel flinging.

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As thou musest still of the ocean
On which thou must float at last,
And seem'st to foreknow
The shipwreck's woe
And the sailor wrenched from the broken mast,
Do I, in this vague emotion,
This sadness that will not pass,
Though the air throb with wings,
And the field laughs and sings,
Do I forebode, alas!
The ship-building longer and wearier,
The voyage's struggle and strife,
And then the darker and drearier
Wreck of a broken life?

THE VOYAGE TO VINLAND

I.

BIÖRN'S BECKONERS

Now Biörn, the son of Heriulf, had ill days
Because the heart within him seethed with blood
That would not be allayed with any toil,
Whether of war or hunting or the oar,
But was anhungered for some joy untried:
For the brain grew not weary with the limbs,
But, while they slept, still hammered like a Troll,
Building all night a bridge of solid dream
Between him and some purpose of his soul,
Or will to find a purpose. With the dawn
The sleep-laid timbers, crumbled to soft mist,

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Denied all foothold. But the dream remained,
And every night with yellow-bearded kings
His sleep was haunted, — mighty men of old,
Once young as he, now ancient like the gods,
And safe as stars in all men's memories.
Strange sagas read he in their sea-blue eyes
Cold as the sea, grandly compassionless;
Like life, they made him eager and then mocked.
Nay, broad awake, they would not let him be;
They shaped themselves gigantic in the mist,
They rose far-beckoning in the lamps of heaven,
They whispered invitation in the winds,
And breath came from them, mightier than the wind,
To strain the lagging sails of his resolve,
Till that grew passion which before was wish,
And youth seemed all too costly to be staked
On the soiled cards wherewith men played their game,
Letting Time pocket up the larger life,
Lost with base gain of raiment, food, and roof.
"What helpeth lightness of the feet?" they said,
"Oblivion runs with swifter foot than they;
Or strength of sinew? New men come as strong,
And those sleep nameless; or renown in war?
Swords grave no name on the long-memoried rock
But moss shall hide it; they alone who wring
Some secret purpose from the unwilling gods
Survive in song for yet a little while
To vex, like us, the dreams of later men,
Ourselves a dream, and dreamlike all we did."

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II.

THORWALD'S LAY

So Biörn went comfortless but for his thought,
And by his thought the more discomforted,
Till Eric Thurlson kept his Yule-tide feast:
And thither came he, called among the rest,
Silent, lone-minded, a church-door to mirth:
But, ere deep draughts forbade such serious song
As the grave Skald might chant nor after blush,
Then Eric looked at Thorwald where he sat
Mute as a cloud amid the stormy hall,
And said: "O Skald, sing now an olden song,
Such as our fathers heard who led great lives;
And, as the bravest on a shield is borne
Along the waving host that shouts him king,
So rode their thrones upon the thronging seas!"
Then the old man arose; white-haired he stood,
White-bearded, and with eyes that looked afar
From their still region of perpetual snow,
Beyond the little smokes and stirs of men:
His head was bowed with gathered flakes of years,
As winter bends the sea-foreboding pine,
But something triumphed in his brow and eye,
Which whoso saw it could not see and crouch:
Loud rang the emptied beakers as he mused,
Brooding his eyried thoughts; then, as an eagle
Circles smooth-winged above the wind-vexed woods,
So wheeled his soul into the air of song
High o'er the stormy hall; and thus he sang:
"The fletcher for his arrow-shaft picks out

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Wood closest-grained, long-seasoned, straight as
light;
And from a quiver full of such as these
The wary bowman, matched against his peers,
Long doubting, singles yet once more the best.
Who is it needs such flawless shafts as Fate?
What archer of his arrows is so choice,
Or hits the white so surely? They are men,
The chosen of her quiver; nor for her
Will every reed suffice, or cross-grained stick
At random from life's vulgar fagot plucked:
Such answer household ends; but she will have
Souls straight and clear, of toughest fibre, sound
Down to the heart of heart; from these she strips
All needless stuff, all sapwood; seasons them;
From circumstance untoward feathers plucks
Crumpled and cheap; and barbs with iron will:
The hour that passes is her quiver-boy:
When she draws bow, 't is not across the wind,
Nor 'gainst the sun her haste-snatched arrow sings,
For sun and wind have plighted faith to her:
Ere men have heard the sinew twang, behold
In the butt's heart her trembling messenger!

"The song is old and simple that I sing;
But old and simple are despised as cheap,
Though hardest to achieve of human things:
Good were the days of yore, when men were tried
By ring of shields, as now by ring of words;
But while the gods are left, and hearts of men,
And wide-doored ocean, still the days are good.
Still o'er the earth hastes Opportunity,

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Seeking the hardy soul that seeks for her.
Be not abroad, nor deaf with household cares
That chatter loudest as they mean the least;
Swift-willed is thrice-willed; late means nevermore;
Impatient is her foot, nor turns again."
He ceased; upon his bosom sank his beard
Sadly, as one who oft had seen her pass
Nor stayed her: and forthwith the frothy tide
Of interrupted wassail roared along.
But Biörn, the son of Heriulf, sat apart
Musing, and, with his eyes upon the fire,
Saw shapes of arrows, lost as soon as seen.
"A ship," he muttered, "is a wingëd bridge
That leadeth every way to man's desire,
And ocean the wide gate to manful luck."
And then with that resolve his heart was bent,
Which, like a humming shaft, through many a stripe
Of day and night, across the unpathwayed seas
Shot the brave prow that cut on Vinland sands
The first rune in the Saga of the West.

III.

GUDRIDA'S PROPHECY

Four weeks they sailed, a speck in sky-shut seas,
Life, where was never life that knew itself,
But tumbled lubber-like in blowing whales;
Thought, where the like had never been before
Since Thought primeval brooded the abyss;
Alone as men were never in the world.

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They saw the icy foundlings of the sea,
White cliffs of silence, beautiful by day,
Or looming, sudden-perilous, at night
In monstrous hush; or sometimes in the dark
The waves broke ominous with paly gleams
Crushed by the prow in sparkles of cold fire.
Then came green stripes of sea that promised land
But brought it not, and on the thirtieth day
Low in the west were wooded shores like cloud.
They shouted as men shout with sudden hope;
But Biörn was silent, such strange loss there is
Between the dream's fulfilment and the dream,
Such sad abatement in the goal attained.
Then Gudrida, that was a prophetess,
Rapt with strange influence from Atlantis, sang:
Her words: the vision was the dreaming shore's.

Looms there the New Land:
Locked in the shadow
Long the gods shut it,
Niggards of newness
They, the o'er-old.

Little it looks there,
Slim as a cloud-streak;
It shall fold peoples
Even as a shepherd
Foldeth his flock.

Silent it sleeps now;
Great ships shall seek it,
Swarming as salmon;

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Noise of its numbers
Two seas shall hear.

Men from the Northland,
Men from the Southland,
Haste empty-handed ;
No more than manhood
Bring they, and hands.

Dark hair and fair hair,
Red blood and blue blood,
There shall be mingled;
Force of the ferment
Makes the New Man.

Pick of all kindreds,
Kings' blood shall theirs be,
Shoots of the eldest
Stock upon Midgard,
Sons of the poor.

Them waits the New Land;
They shall subdue it,
Leaving their sons' sons
Space for the body,
Space for the soul.

Leaving their sons' sons
All things save song-craft,
Plant long in growing,
Thrusting its tap-root
Deep in the Gone.

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Here men shall grow up
Strong from self-helping;
Eyes for the present
Bring they as eagles',
Blind to the Past.

They shall make over
Creed, law, and custom;
Driving-men, doughty
Builders of empire,
Builders of men.

Here is no singer;
What should they sing of?
They, the unresting?
Labor is ugly,
Loathsome is change.

These the old gods hate,
Dwellers in dream-land,
Drinking delusion
Out of the empty
Skull of the Past.

These hate the old gods,
Warring against them;
Fatal to Odin,
Here the wolf Fenrir
Lieth in wait.

Here the gods' Twilight
Gathers, earth-gulfing;

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Blackness of battle,
Fierce till the Old World
Flare up in fire.

Doubt not, my Northmen;
Fate loves the fearless;
Fools, when their roof-tree
Falls, think it doomsday;
Firm stands the sky.

Over the ruin
See I the promise;
Crisp waves the cornfield,
Peace-walled, the homestead
Waits open-doored.

There lies the New Land;
Yours to behold it,
Not to possess it;
Slowly Fate's perfect
Fulness shall come.

Then from your strong loins
Seed shall be scattered,
Men to the marrow,
Wilderness tamers,
Walkers of waves.

Jealous, the old gods
Shut it in shadow,
Wisely they ward it,
Egg of the serpent,
Bane to them all.

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Stronger and sweeter
New gods shall seek it,
Fill it with man-folk
Wise for the future,
Wise from the past.

Here all is all men's,
Save only Wisdom;
King he that wins her;
Him hail they helmsman,
Highest of heart.

Might makes no master
Here any longer;
Sword is not swayer;
Here e'en the gods are
Selfish no more.

Walking the New Earth,
Lo, a divine One
Greets all men godlike,
Calls them his kindred,
He, the Divine.

Is it Thor's hammer
Rays in his right hand?
Weaponless walks he;
It is the White Christ,
Stronger than Thor.

Here shall a realm rise
Mighty in manhood;

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Justice and Mercy
Here set a stronghold
Safe without spear.

Weak was the Old World,
Wearily war-fenced;
Out of its ashes,
Strong as the morning,
Springeth the New.

Beauty of promise,
Promise of beauty,
Safe in the silence
Sleep thou, till cometh
Light to thy lids!

Thee shall awaken
Flame from the furnace,
Bath of all brave ones,
Cleanser of conscience,
Welder of will.

Lowly shall love thee,
Thee, open-handed!
Stalwart shall shield thee,
Thee, worth their best blood,
Waif of the West!

Then shall come singers,
Singing no swan-song,
Birth-carols, rather,
Meet for the man child
Mighty of bone.

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MAHMOOD THE IMAGE-BREAKER

OLD events have modern meanings; only that survives
Of past history which finds kindred in all hearts and lives.

Mahmood once, the idol-breaker, spreader of the Faith,
Was at Sumnat tempted sorely, as the legend saith.

In the great pagoda's centre, monstrous and abhorred,
Granite on a throne of granite, sat the temple's lord.

Mahmood paused a moment, silenced by the silent face
That, with eyes of stone unwavering, awed the ancient place.

Then the Brahmins knelt before him, by his doubt made bold,
Pledging for their idol's ransom countless gems and gold.

Gold was yellow dirt to Mahmood, but of precious use,
Since from it the roots of power suck a potent juice.

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"Were yon stone alone in question, this would
please me well,"
Mahmood said; "but, with the block there, I my
truth must sell.

"Wealth and rule slip down with Fortune, as her
wheel turns round;
He who keeps his faith, he only cannot be dis-
crowned.

"Little were a change of station, loss of life or
crown,
But the wreck were past retrieving if the Man fell
down."

So his iron mace he lifted, smote with might and
main,
And the idol, on the pavement tumbling, burst in
twain.

Luck obeys the downright striker; from the hollow
core,
Fifty times the Brahmins' offer deluged all the
floor.

INVITA MINERVA

THE Bardling came where by a river grew
The pennoned reeds, that, as the west-wind blew,
Gleamed and sighed plaintively, as if they knew
What music slept enchanted in each stem,

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Till Pan should choose some happy one of them,
And with wise lips enlife it through and through.

The Bardling thought, "A pipe is all I need;
Once I have sought me out a clear, smooth reed,
And shaped it to my fancy, I proceed
To breathe such strains as, yonder mid the rocks,
The strange youth blows, that tends Admetus' flocks,
And all the maidens shall to me pay heed."

The summer day he spent in questful round,
And many a reed he marred, but never found
A conjuring-spell to free the imprisoned sound;
At last his vainly wearied limbs he laid
Beneath a sacred laurel's flickering shade,
And sleep about his brain her cobweb wound.

Then strode the mighty Mother through his dreams,
Saying: "The reeds along a thousand streams
Are mine, and who is he that plots and schemes
To snare the melodies wherewith my breath
Sounds through the double pipes of Life and Death,
Atoning what to men mad discord seems?

"He seeks not me, but I seek oft in vain
For him who shall my voiceful reeds constrain,
And make them utter their melodious pain;
He flies the immortal gift, for well he knows
His life of life must with its overflows
Flood the unthankful pipe, nor come again.

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"Thou fool, who dost my harmless subjects wrong,
'T is not the singer's wish that makes the song:
The rhythmic beauty wanders dumb, how long,
Nor stoops to any daintiest instrument,
Till, found its mated lips, their sweet consent
Makes mortal breath than Time and Fate more strong."

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

I.

'T IS a woodland enchanted!
By no sadder spirit
Than blackbirds and thrushes,
That whistle to cheer it
All day in the bushes,
This woodland is haunted:
And in a small clearing,
Beyond sight or hearing
Of human annoyance,
The little fount gushes,
First smoothly, then dashes
And gurgles and flashes,
To the maples and ashes
Confiding its joyance;
Unconscious confiding,
Then, silent and glossy,
Slips winding and hiding
Through alder-stems mossy,
Through gossamer roots
Fine as nerves,

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That tremble, as shoots
Through their magnetized curves
The allurement delicious
Of the water's capricious
Thrills, gushes, and swerves.

II.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
I am writing no fiction;
And this fount, its sole daughter,
To the woodland was granted
To pour holy water
And win benediction;
In summer-noon flushes,
When all the wood hushes,
Blue dragon-flies knitting
To and fro in the sun,
With sidelong jerk flitting
Sink down on the rushes,
And, motionless sitting,
Hear it bubble and run,
Hear its low inward singing,
With level wings swinging
On green tasselled rushes,
To dream in the sun.

III.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
The great August noonlight,
Through myriad rifts slanted,
Leaf and bole thickly sprinkles
With flickering gold;

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There, in warm August gloaming,
With quick, silent brightenings,
From meadow-lands roaming,
The firefly twinkles
His fitful heat-lightnings;
There the magical moonlight
With meek, saintly glory
Steeps summit and wold;
There whippoorwills plain in the solitudes hoary
With lone cries that wander
Now hither, now yonder,
Like souls doomed of old
To a mild purgatory;
But through noonlight and moonlight
The little fount tinkles
Its silver saints'-bells,
That no sprite ill-boding
May make his abode in
Those innocent dells.

IV.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
When the phebe scarce whistles
Once an hour to his fellow,
And, where red lilies flaunted,
Balloons from the thistles
Tell summer's disasters,
The butterflies yellow,
As caught in an eddy
Of air's silent ocean,
Sink, waver, and steady
O'er goats'-beard and asters,

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Like souls of dead flowers,
With aimless emotion
Still lingering unready
To leave their old bowers;
And the fount is no dumber,
But still gleams and flashes,
And gurgles and plashes,
To the measure of summer;
The butterflies hear it,
And spell-bound are holden,
Still balancing near it
O'er the goats'-beard so golden.

v.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
A vast silver willow,
I know not how planted,
(This wood is enchanted,
And full of surprises,)
Stands stemming a billow,
A motionless billow
Of ankle-deep mosses;
Two great roots it crosses
To make a round basin,
And there the Fount rises;
Ah, too pure a mirror
For one sick of error
To see his sad face in!
No dew-drop is stiller
In its lupin-leaf setting
Than this water moss-bounded;
But a tiny sand-pillar

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From the bottom keeps jetting,
And mermaid ne'er sounded
Through the wreaths of a shell,
Down amid crimson dulses
In some cavern of ocean,
A melody sweeter
Than the delicate pulses,
The soft, noiseless metre,
The pause and the swell
Of that musical motion:
I recall it, not see it;
Could vision be clearer?
Half I 'm fain to draw nearer
Half tempted to flee it;
The sleeping Past wake not,
Beware!
One forward step take not,
Ah! break not
That quietude rare!
By my step unaffrighted
A thrush hops before it,
And o'er it
A birch hangs delighted,
Dipping, dipping, dipping its tremulous hair;
Pure as the fountain, once
I came to the place,
(How dare I draw nearer?)
I bent o'er its mirror,
And saw a child's face
Mid locks of bright gold in it;
Yes, pure as this fountain once, —
Since, how much error!

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Too holy a mirror
For the man to behold in it
His harsh, bearded countenance!

VI.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
Ah, fly unreturning!
Yet stay; —
'T is a woodland enchanted,
Where wonderful chances
Have sway;
Luck flees from the cold one
But leaps to the bold one
Half-way;
Why should I be daunted?
Still the smooth mirror glances,
Still the amber sand dances,
One look, — then away!
O magical glass!
Canst keep in thy bosom
Shades of leaf and of blossom
When summer days pass,
So that when thy wave hardens
It shapes as it pleases,
Unharmed by the breezes,
Its fine hanging gardens?
Hast those in thy keeping,
And canst not uncover,
Enchantedly sleeping,
The old shade of thy lover?
It is there! I have found it!
He wakes, the long sleeper!

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The pool is grown deeper,
The sand dance is ending,
The white floor sinks, blending
With skies that below me
Are deepening and bending,
And a child's face alone
That seems not to know me,
With hair that fades golden
In the heaven-glow round it,
Looks up at my own;
Ah, glimpse through the portal
That leads to the throne,
That opes the child's olden
Regions Elysian!
Ah, too holy vision
For thy skirts to be holden
By soiled hand of mortal!
It wavers, it scatters,
'T is gone past recalling!
A tear's sudden falling
The magic cup shatters,
Breaks the spell of the waters,
And the sand cone once more,
With a ceaseless renewing,
Its dance is pursuing
On the silvery floor,
O'er and o'er,
With a noiseless and ceaseless renewing.

VII.

'T is a woodland enchanted!
If you ask me, *Where is it?*

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I can but make answer,
"'T is past my disclosing;"
Not to choice is it granted
By sure paths to visit
The still pool enclosing
Its blithe little dancer;
But in some day, the rarest
Of many Septembers,
When the pulses of air rest,
And all things lie dreaming
In drowsy haze steaming
From the wood's glowing embers,
Then, sometimes, unheeding,
And asking not whither,
By a sweet inward leading
My feet are drawn thither,
And, looking with awe in the magical mirror,
I see through my tears,
Half doubtful of seeing,
The face unperverted,
The warm golden being
Of a child of five years;
And spite of the mists and the error,
And the days overcast,
Can feel that I walk undeserted,
But forever attended
By the glad heavens that bended
O'er the innocent past;
Toward fancy or truth
Doth the sweet vision win me?
Dare I think that I cast
In the fountain of youth

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The fleeting reflection
Of some bygone perfection
That still lingers in me?

YUSSOUF

A STRANGER came one night to Yussouf's tent,
Saying, "Behold one outcast and in dread,
Against whose life the bow of power is bent,
Who flies, and hath not where to lay his head;
I come to thee for shelter and for food,
To Yussouf, called through all our tribes 'The Good.'"

"This tent is mine," said Yussouf, "but no more
Than it is God's; come in, and be at peace;
Freely shalt thou partake of all my store
As I of His who buildeth over these
Our tents his glorious roof of night and day,
And at whose door none ever yet heard Nay."

So Yussouf entertained his guest that night,
And, waking him ere day, said: "Here is gold;
My swiftest horse is saddled for thy flight;
Depart before the prying day grow bold."
As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,
So nobleness enkindleth nobleness.

That inward light the stranger's face made grand,
Which shines from all self-conquest; kneeling low,
He bowed his forehead upon Yussouf's hand,

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Sobbing: "O Sheik, I cannot leave thee so;
I will repay thee; all this thou hast done
Unto that Ibrahim who slew thy son!"

"Take thrice the gold," said Yussouf, "for with thee
Into the desert, never to return,
My one black thought shall ride away from me;
First-born, for whom by day and night I yearn,
Balanced and just are all of God's decrees;
Thou art avenged, my first-born, sleep in peace!"

THE DARKENED MIND

THE fire is burning clear and blithely,
Pleasantly whistles the winter wind;
We are about thee, thy friends and kindred,
On us all flickers the firelight kind;
There thou sittest in thy wonted corner
Lone and awful in thy darkened mind.

There thou sittest; now and then thou moanest;
Thou dost talk with what we cannot see,
Lookest at us with an eye so doubtful,
It doth put us very far from thee;
There thou sittest; we would fain be nigh thee,
But we know that it can never be.

We can touch thee, still we are no nearer;
Gather round thee, still thou art alone;
The wide chasm of reason is between us;

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Thou confutest kindness with a moan;
We can speak to thee, and thou canst answer,
Like two prisoners through a wall of stone.

Hardest heart would call it very awful
When thou look'st at us and seest — oh, what?
If we move away, thou sittest gazing
With those vague eyes at the selfsame spot,
And thou mutterest, thy hands thou wringest,
Seeing something, — us thou seest not.

Strange it is that, in this open brightness,
Thou shouldst sit in such a narrow cell;
Strange it is that thou shouldst be so lonesome
Where those are who love thee all so well;
Not so much of thee is left among us
As the hum outliving the hushed bell.

WHAT RABBI JEHOSHA SAID

Rabbi Jehosha used to say
That God made angels every day,
Perfect as Michael and the rest
First brooded in creation's nest,
Whose only office was to cry
Hosanna! once, and then to die;
Or rather, with Life's essence blent,
To be led home from banishment.

Rabbi Jehosha had the skill
To know that Heaven is in God's will;

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And doing that, though for a space
One heart-beat long, may win a grace
As full of grandeur and of glow
As Princes of the Chariot know.

'T were glorious, no doubt, to be
One of the strong-winged Hierarchy,
To burn with Seraphs, or to shine
With Cherubs, deathlessly divine;
Yet I, perhaps, poor earthly clod,
Could I forget myself in God,
Could I but find my nature's clue
Simply as birds and blossoms do,
And but for one rapt moment know
'T is Heaven must come, not we must go,
Should win my place as near the throne
As the pearl-angel of its zone,
And God would listen mid the throng
For my one breath of perfect song,
That, in its simple human way,
Said all the Host of Heaven could say.

ALL-SAINTS

One feast, of holy days the crest,
I, though no Churchman, love to keep,
All-Saints, — the unknown good that rest
In God's still memory folded deep;
The bravely dumb that did their deed,
And scorned to blot it with a name,

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Men of the plain heroic breed,
That loved Heaven's silence more than fame.

Such lived not in the past alone,
But thread to-day the unheeding street,
And stairs to Sin and Famine known
Sing with the welcome of their feet;
The den they enter grows a shrine,
The grimy sash an oriel burns,
Their cup of water warms like wine,
Their speech is filled from heavenly urns.

About their brows to me appears
An aureole traced in tenderest light,
The rainbow-gleam of smiles through tears
In dying eyes, by them made bright,
Of souls that shivered on the edge
Of that chill ford repassed no more,
And in their mercy felt the pledge
And sweetness of the farther shore.

A WINTER-EVENING HYMN TO MY FIRE

I.

BEAUTY on my hearth-stone blazing!
To-night the triple Zoroaster
Shall my prophet be and master:
To-night will I pure Magian be,
Hymns to thy sole honor raising,

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While thou leapest fast and faster,
Wild with self-delighted glee,
Or sink'st low and glowest faintly
As an aureole still and saintly,
Keeping cadence to my praising
Thee! still thee! and only thee!

II.

Elfish daughter of Apollo!
Thee, from thy father stolen and bound
To serve in Vulcan's clangorous smithy,
Prometheus (primal Yankee) found,
And, when he had tampered with thee,
(Too confiding little maid!)
In a reed's precarious hollow
To our frozen earth conveyed:
For he swore I know not what;
Endless ease should be thy lot,
Pleasure that should never falter,
Lifelong play, and not a duty
Save to hover o'er the altar,
Vision of celestial beauty,
Fed with precious woods and spices;
Then, perfidious! having got
Thee in the net of his devices,
Sold thee into endless slavery,
Made thee a drudge to boil the pot,
Thee, Helios' daughter, who dost bear
His likeness in thy golden hair;
Thee, by nature wild and wavery,
Palpitating, evanescent

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As the shade of Dian's crescent,
Life, motion, gladness, everywhere!

III.

Fathom deep men bury thee
In the furnace dark and still,
There, with dreariest mockery,
Making thee eat, against thy will,
Blackest Pennsylvanian stone;
But thou dost avenge thy doom,
For, from out thy catacomb,
Day and night thy wrath is blown
In a withering simoom,
And, adown that cavern drear,
Thy black pitfall in the floor,
Staggers the lusty antique cheer,
Despairing, and is seen no more!

IV.

Elfish I may rightly name thee;
We enslave, but cannot tame thee;
With fierce snatches, now and then,
Thou pluckest at thy right again,
And thy down-trod instincts savage
To stealthy insurrection creep
While thy wittol masters sleep,
And burst in undiscerning ravage:
Then how thou shak'st thy bacchant locks!
While brazen pulses, far and near,
Throb thick and thicker, wild with fear
And dread conjecture, till the drear
Disordered clangor every steeple rocks!

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V.

But when we make a friend of thee,
And admit thee to the hall
On our nights of festival,
Then, Cinderella, who could see
In thee the kitchen's stunted thrall?
Once more a Princess lithe and tall,
Thou dancest with a whispering tread,
While the bright marvel of thy head
In crinkling gold floats all abroad,
And gloriously dost vindicate
The legend of thy lineage great,
Earth-exiled daughter of the Pythian god!
Now in the ample chimney-place,
To honor thy acknowledged race,
We crown thee high with laurel good,
Thy shining father's sacred wood,
Which, guessing thy ancestral right,
Sparkles and snaps its dumb delight,
And, at thy touch, poor outcast one,
Feels through its gladdened fibres go
The tingle and thrill and vassal glow
Of instincts loyal to the sun.

VI.

O thou of home the guardian Lar,
And, when our earth hath wandered far
Into the cold, and deep snow covers
The walks of our New England lovers,
Their sweet secluded evening-star!
'T was with thy rays the English Muse
Ripened her mild domestic hues;

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'T was by thy flicker that she conned
The fireside wisdom that enrings
With light from heaven familiar things;
By thee she found the homely faith
In whose mild eyes thy comfort stay'th,
When Death, extinguishing his torch,
Gropes for the latch-string in the porch;
The love that wanders not beyond
His earliest nest, but sits and sings
While children smooth his patient wings;
Therefore with thee I love to read
Our brave old poets: at thy touch how stirs
Life in the withered words! how swift recede
Time's shadows! and how glows again
Through its dead mass the incandescent verse,
As when upon the anvils of the brain
It glittering lay, cyclopically wrought
By the fast-throbbing hammers of the poet's thought!
Thou murmurest, too, divinely stirred,
The aspirations unattained,
The rhythms so rathe and delicate,
They bent and strained
And broke, beneath the sombre weight
Of any airiest mortal word.

VII.

What warm protection dost thou bend
Round curtained talk of friend with friend,
While the gray snow-storm, held aloof,
To softest outline rounds the roof,

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Or the rude North with baffled strain
Shoulders the frost-starred window-pane!
Now the kind nymph to Bacchus born
By Morpheus' daughter, she that seems
Gifted upon her natal morn
By him with fire, by her with dreams,
Nicotia, dearer to the Muse
Than all the grape's bewildering juice,
We worship, unforbid of thee;
And, as her incense floats and curls
In airy spires and wayward whirls,
Or poises on its tremulous stalk
A flower of frailest revery,
So winds and loiters, idly free,
The current of unguided talk,
Now laughter-rippled, and now caught
In smooth, dark pools of deeper thought.
Meanwhile thou mellowest every word,
A sweetly unobtrusive third;
For thou hast magic beyond wine,
To unlock natures each to each;
The unspoken thought thou canst divine;
Thou fill'st the pauses of the speech
With whispers that to dream-land reach
And frozen fancy-springs unchain
In Arctic outskirts of the brain;
Sun of all inmost confidences,
To thy rays doth the heart unclose
Its formal calyx of pretences,
That close against rude day's offences,
And open its shy midnight rose!

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VIII.

Thou holdest not the master key
With which thy Sire sets free the mystic gates
Of Past and Future: not for common fates
Do they wide open fling,
And, with a far-heard ring,
Swing back their willing valves melodiously;
Only to ceremonial days,
And great processions of imperial song
That set the world at gaze,
Doth such high privilege belong:
But thou a postern-door canst ope
To humbler chambers of the selfsame palace
Where Memory lodges, and her sister Hope,
Whose being is but as a crystal chalice
Which, with her various mood, the elder fills
Of joy or sorrow,
So coloring as she wills
With hues of yesterday the unconscious morrow.

IX.

Thou sinkest, and my fancy sinks with thee:
For thee I took the idle shell,
And struck the unused chords again,
But they are gone who listened well;
Some are in heaven, and all are far from me:
Even as I sing, it turns to pain,
And with vain tears my eyelids throb and swell:
Enough; I come not of the race
That hawk their sorrows in the market-place.
Earth stops the ears I best had loved to please;
Then break, ye untuned chords, or rust in peace!

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As if a white-haired actor should come back
Some midnight to the theatre void and black,
And there rehearse his youth's great part
Mid thin applauses of the ghosts,
So seems it now: ye crowd upon my heart,
And I bow down in silence, shadowy hosts!

FANCY'S CASUISTRY

How struggles with the tempest's swells
That warning of tumultuous bells!
The fire is loose! and frantic knells
Throb fast and faster,
As tower to tower confusedly tells
News of disaster.

But on my far-off solitude
No harsh alarums can intrude;
The terror comes to me subdued
And charmed by distance,
To deepen the habitual mood
Of my existence.

Are those, I muse, the Easter chimes?
And listen, weaving careless rhymes
While the loud city's griefs and crimes
Pay gentle allegiance
To the fine quiet that sublimes
These dreamy regions.

And when the storm o'erwhelms the shore,
I watch entranced as, o'er and o'er,

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The light revolves amid the roar
So still and saintly,
Now large and near, now more and more
Withdrawing faintly.

This, too, despairing sailors see
Flash out the breakers 'neath their lee
In sudden snow, then lingeringly
Wane tow'rd eclipse,
While through the dark the shuddering sea
Gropes for the ships.

And is it right, this mood of mind
That thus, in revery enshrined,
Can in the world mere topics find
For musing stricture,
Seeing the life of humankind
Only as picture?

The events in line of battle go;
In vain for me their trumpets blow
As unto him that lieth low
In death's dark arches,
And through the sod hears throbbing slow
The muffled marches.

O Duty, am I dead to thee
In this my cloistered ecstasy,
In this lone shallop on the sea
That drifts tow'rd Silence?
And are those visioned shores I see
But sirens' islands?

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My Dante frowns with lip-locked mien,
As who would say, "'T is those, I ween,
Whom lifelong armor-chafe makes lean
That win the laurel;"
But where *is* Truth? What does it mean,
The world-old quarrel?

Such questionings are idle air:
Leave what to do and what to spare
To the inspiring moment's care,
Nor ask for payment
Of fame or gold, but just to wear
Unspotted raiment.

TO MR. JOHN BARTLETT

WHO HAD SENT ME A SEVEN-POUND TROUT

Fit for an Abbot of Theleme,
For the whole Cardinals' College, or
The Pope himself to see in dream
Before his lenten vision gleam,
He lies there, the sogdologer!

His precious flanks with stars besprent,
Worthy to swim in Castaly!
The friend by whom such gifts are sent,
For him shall bumpers full be spent,
His health! be Luck his fast ally!

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I see him trace the wayward brook
Amid the forest mysteries,
Where at their shades shy aspens look,
Or where, with many a gurgling crook,
It croons its woodland histories.

I see leaf-shade and sun-fleck lend
Their tremulous, sweet vicissitude
To smooth, dark pool, to crinkling bend, —
(Oh, stew him, Ann, as 't were your friend,
With amorous solicitude !)

I see him step with caution due,
Soft as if shod with moccasins,
Grave as in church, for who plies you,
Sweet craft, is safe as in a pew
From all our common stock o' sins.

The unerring fly I see him cast,
That as a rose-leaf falls as soft,
A flash ! a whirl ! he has him fast !
We tyros, how that struggle last
Confuses and appalls us oft.

Unfluttered he : calm as the sky
Looks on our tragi-comedies,
This way and that he lets him fly,
A sunbeam-shuttle, then to die
Lands him, with cool *aplomb*, at ease.

The friend who gave our board such gust,
Life's care may he o'erstep it half,

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And, when Death hooks him, as he must,
He 'll do it handsomely, I trust,
And John H—— write his epitaph!

Oh, born beneath the Fishes' sign,
Of constellations happiest,
May he somewhere with Walton dine,
May Horace send him Massic wine,
And Burns Scotch drink, the nappiest!

And when they come his deeds to weigh,
And how he used the talents his,
One trout-scale in the scales he 'll lay
(If trout had scales), and 't will outsway
The wrong side of the balances.

ODE TO HAPPINESS

SPIRIT, that rarely comest now
And only to contrast my gloom,
Like rainbow-feathered birds that bloom
A moment on some autumn bough
That, with the spurn of their farewell,
Sheds its last leaves, — thou once didst dwell
With me year-long, and make intense
To boyhood's wisely vacant days
Their fleet but all-sufficing grace
Of trustful inexperience,
While soul could still transfigure sense,
And thrill, as with love's first caress,

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At life's mere unexpectedness.
  Days when my blood would leap and run
    As full of sunshine as a breeze,
    Or spray tossed up by Summer seas
  That doubts if it be sea or sun!
Days that flew swiftly like the band
  That played in Grecian games at strife,
And passed from eager hand to hand
  The onward-dancing torch of life!

Wing-footed! thou abid'st with him
  Who asks it not; but he who hath
  Watched o'er the waves thy waning path,
Shall nevermore behold returning
Thy high-heaped canvas shoreward yearning!
Thou first reveal'st to us thy face
Turned o'er the shoulder's parting grace,
  A moment glimpsed, then seen no more, —
Thou whose swift footsteps we can trace
  Away from every mortal door.

Nymph of the unreturning feet,
  How may I win thee back? But no,
  I do thee wrong to call thee so;
'T is I am changed, not thou art fleet:
The man thy presence feels again,
Not in the blood, but in the brain,
Spirit, that lov'st the upper air
Serene and passionless and rare,
  Such as on mountain heights we find
  And wide-viewed uplands of the mind;
Or such as scorns to coil and sing

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Round any but the eagle's wing
  Of souls that with long upward beat
  Have won an undisturbed retreat
Where, poised like wingëd victories,
They mirror in relentless eyes
  The life broad-basking 'neath their feet, —
Man ever with his Now at strife,
  Pained with first gasps of earthly air,
  Then praying Death the last to spare,
Still fearful of the ampler life.

Not unto them dost thou consent
  Who, passionless, can lead at ease
A life of unalloyed content
  A life like that of land-locked seas,
Who feel no elemental gush
Of tidal forces, no fierce rush
  Of storm deep-grasping scarcely spent
  'Twixt continent and continent.
Such quiet souls have never known
  Thy truer inspiration, thou
  Who lov'st to feel upon thy brow
Spray from the plunging vessel thrown
  Grazing the tusked lee shore, the cliff
That o'er the abrupt gorge holds its breath,
  Where the frail hair-breadth of an *if*
Is all that sunders life and death:
These, too, are cared for, and round these
Bends her mild crook thy sister Peace;
  These in unvexed dependence lie,
  Each 'neath his strip of household sky;
O'er these clouds wander, and the blue

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Hangs motionless the whole day through;
Stars rise for them, and moons grow large
And lessen in such tranquil wise
As joys and sorrows do that rise
Within their nature's sheltered marge;
Their hours into each other flit
Like the leaf-shadows of the vine
And fig-tree under which they sit,
And their still lives to heaven incline
With an unconscious habitude,
Unhistoried as smokes that rise
From happy hearths and sight elude
In kindred blue of morning skies.

Wayward! when once we feel thy lack,
'T is worse than vain to woo thee back!
Yet there is one who seems to be
Thine elder sister, in whose eyes
A faint far northern light will rise
Sometimes, and bring a dream of thee;
She is not that for which youth hoped,
But she hath blessings all her own,
Thoughts pure as lilies newly oped,
And faith to sorrow given alone:
Almost I deem that it is thou
Come back with graver matron brow,
With deepened eyes and bated breath,
Like one that somewhere hath met Death:
But "No," she answers, "I am she
Whom the gods love, Tranquillity;
That other whom you seek forlorn
Half earthly was; but I am born

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Of the immortals, and our race
Wears still some sadness on its face:
  He wins me late, but keeps me long,
Who, dowered with every gift of passion,
In that fierce flame can forge and fashion
  Of sin and self the anchor strong;
Can thence compel the driving force
Of daily life's mechanic course,
Nor less the nobler energies
Of needful toil and culture wise;
Whose soul is worth the tempter's lure
Who can renounce, and yet endure,
To him I come, not lightly wooed,
But won by silent fortitude."

VILLA FRANCA

1859

WAIT a little: do *we* not wait?
Louis Napoleon is not Fate,
Francis Joseph is not Time;
There 's One hath swifter feet than Crime;
Cannon-parliaments settle naught;
Venice is Austria's, — whose is Thought?
Minié is good, but, spite of change,
Gutenberg's gun has the longest range.
  Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
  Lachĕsis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
  In the shadow, year out, year in,
  The silent headsman waits forever.

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Wait, we say: our years are long;
Men are weak, but Man is strong;
Since the stars first curved their rings,
We have looked on many things;
Great wars come and great wars go,
Wolf-tracks light on polar snow;
We shall see him come and gone,
This second-hand Napoleon.
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
In the shadow, year out, year in,
The silent headsman waits forever.

We saw the elder Corsican,
And Clotho muttered as she span,
While crowned lackeys bore the train,
Of the pinchbeck Charlemagne:
"Sister, stint not length of thread!
Sister, stay the scissors dread!
On Saint Helen's granite bleak,
Hark, the vulture whets his beak!"
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
In the shadow, year out, year in,
The silent headsman waits forever.

The Bonapartes, we know their bees
That wade in honey red to the knees;
Their patent reaper, its sheaves sleep sound
In dreamless garners underground:
We know false glory's spendthrift race
Pawning nations for feathers and lace;

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It may be short, it may be long,
"'T is reckoning-day!" sneers unpaid Wrong.
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
In the shadow, year out, year in,
The silent headsman waits forever.

The Cock that wears the Eagle's skin
Can promise what he ne'er could win;
Slavery reaped for fine words sown,
System for all, and rights for none,
Despots atop, a wild clan below,
Such is the Gaul from long ago;
Wash the black from the Ethiop's face,
Wash the past out of man or race!
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
In the shadow, year out, year in,
The silent headsman waits forever.

'Neath Gregory's throne a spider swings,
And snares the people for the kings;
"Luther is dead; old quarrels pass;
The stake's black scars are healed with grass;"
So dreamers prate; did man ere live
Saw priest or woman yet forgive?
But Luther's broom is left, and eyes
Peep o'er their creeds to where it lies.
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
In the shadow, year out, year in,
The silent headsman waits forever.

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Smooth sails the ship of either realm,
Kaiser and Jesuit at the helm;
We look down the depths, and mark
Silent workers in the dark
Building slow the sharp-tusked reefs,
Old instincts hardening to new beliefs;
Patience a little; learn to wait;
Hours are long on the clock of Fate.
Spin, spin, Clotho, spin!
Lachesis, twist! and, Atropos, sever!
Darkness is strong, and so is Sin,
But surely God endures forever!

THE MINER

Down 'mid the tangled roots of things
That coil about the central fire,
I seek for that which giveth wings
To stoop, not soar, to my desire.

Sometimes I hear, as 't were a sigh,
The sea's deep yearning far above,
"Thou hast the secret not," I cry,
"In deeper deeps is hid my Love."

They think I burrow from the sun,
In darkness, all alone, and weak;
Such loss were gain if He were won,
For 't is the sun's own Sun I seek.

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"The earth," they murmur, "is the tomb
That vainly sought his life to prison;
Why grovel longer in the gloom?
He is not here; he hath arisen."

More life for me where he hath lain
Hidden while ye believed him dead,
Than in cathedrals cold and vain,
Built on loose sands of *It is said.*

My search is for the living gold;
Him I desire who dwells recluse,
And not his image worn and old,
Day-servant of our sordid use.

If him I find not, yet I find
The ancient joy of cell and church,
The glimpse, the surety undefined,
The unquenched ardor of the search.

Happier to chase a flying goal
Than to sit counting laurelled gains,
To guess the Soul within the soul
Than to be lord of what remains.

Hide still, best Good, in subtile wise,
Beyond my nature's utmost scope;
Be ever absent from mine eyes
To be twice present in my hope!

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GOLD EGG: A DREAM-FANTASY

HOW A STUDENT IN SEARCH OF THE BEAUTIFUL FELL ASLEEP IN DRESDEN OVER HERR PROFESSOR DOCTOR VISCHER'S WISSENSCHAFT DES SCHÖNEN, AND WHAT CAME THEREOF

I SWAM with undulation soft,
  Adrift on Vischer's ocean,
And, from my cockboat up aloft,
Sent down my mental plummet oft
  In hope to reach a notion.

But from the metaphysic sea
  No bottom was forthcoming,
And all the while (how drearily!)
In one eternal note of B
  My German stove kept humming.

"What's Beauty?" mused I; "is it told
  By synthesis? analysis?
Have you not made us lead of gold?
To feed your crucible, not sold
  Our temple's sacred chalices?"

Then o'er my senses came a change;
  My book seemed all traditions,
Old legends of profoundest range,
Diablery, and stories strange
  Of goblins, elves, magicians.

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Old gods in modern saints I found,
  Old creeds in strange disguises;
I thought them safely underground,
And here they were, all safe and sound,
  Without a sign of phthisis.

Truth was, my outward eyes were closed,
  Although I did not know it;
Deep into dream-land I had dozed,
And thus was happily transposed
  From proser into poet.

So what I read took flesh and blood,
  And turned to living creatures:
The words were but the dingy bud
That bloomed, like Adam, from the mud.
  To human forms and features.

I saw how Zeus was lodged once more
  By Baucis and Philemon;
The text said, "Not alone of yore,
But every day, at every door,
  Knocks still the masking Demon."

DAIMON 't was printed in the book
  And, as I read it slowly,
The letters stirred and changed, and took
Jove's stature, the Olympian look
  Of painless melancholy.

He paused upon the threshold worn:
  "With coin I cannot pay you;

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Yet would I fain make some return;
The gift for cheapness do not spurn,
Accept this hen, I pray you.

"Plain feathers wears my Hemera,
And has from ages olden;
She makes her nest in common hay,
And yet, of all the birds that lay,
Her eggs alone are golden."

He turned, and could no more be seen;
Old Baucis stared a moment,
Then tossed poor Partlet on the green,
And with a tone, half jest, half spleen,
Thus made her housewife's comment:

"The stranger had a queerish face,
His smile was hardly pleasant,
And, though he meant it for a grace,
Yet this old hen of barnyard race
Was but a stingy present.

"She 's quite too old for laying eggs,
Nay, even to make a soup of;
One only needs to see her legs, —
You might as well boil down the pegs
I made the brood-hen's coop of!

"Some eighteen score of such do I
Raise every year, her sisters;
Go, in the woods your fortunes try,
All day for one poor earthworm pry,
And scratch your toes to blisters!"

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Philemon found the rede was good,
  And, turning on the poor hen,
He clapt his hands, and stamped, and shooed,
Hunting the exile tow'rd the wood,
  To house with snipe and moor-hen.

A poet saw and cried: "Hold! hold!
  What are you doing, madman?
Spurn you more wealth than can be told,
The fowl that lays the eggs of gold,
  Because she 's plainly clad, man?"

To him Philemon: "I 'll not balk
  Thy will with any shackle;
Wilt add a burden to thy walk?
There! take her without further talk:
  You 're both but fit to cackle!"

But scarce the poet touched the bird,
  It swelled to stature regal;
And when her cloud-wide wings she stirred,
A whisper as of doom was heard,
  'T was Jove's bolt-bearing eagle.

As when from far-off cloud-bergs springs
  A crag, and, hurtling under,
From cliff to cliff the rumor flings,
So she from flight-foreboding wings
  Shook out a murmurous thunder

She gripped the poet to her breast,
  And ever, upward soaring,

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Earth seemed a new moon in the west,
And then one light among the rest
Where squadrons lie at mooring.

How tell to what heaven hallowed seat
The eagle bent his courses?
The waves that on its bases beat,
The gales that round it weave and fleet,
Are life's creative forces.

Here was the bird's primeval nest,
High on a promontory
Star-pharosed, where she takes her rest
To brood new æons 'neath her breast,
The future's unfledged glory.

I know not how, but I was there
All feeling, hearing, seeing;
It was not wind that stirred my hair
But living breath, the essence rare
Of unembodied being.

And in the nest an egg of gold
Lay soft in self-made lustre,
Gazing whereon, what depths untold
Within, what marvels manifold,
Seemed silently to muster!

Daily such splendors to confront
Is still to me and you sent?
It glowed as when Saint Peter's front,

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Illumed, forgets its stony wont,
And seems to throb translucent.

One saw therein the life of man,
(Or so the poet found it,)
The yolk and white, conceive who can,
Were the glad earth, that, floating, span
In the glad heaven around it.

I knew this as one knows in dream,
Where no effects to causes
Are chained as in our work-day scheme,
And then was wakened by a scream
That seemed to come from Baucis.

"Bless Zeus!" she cried, "I 'm safe below!"
First pale, then red as coral;
And I, still drowsy, pondered slow,
And seemed to find, but hardly know,
Something like this for moral.

Each day the world is born anew
For him who takes it rightly;
Not fresher that which Adam knew,
Not sweeter that whose moonlit dew
Entranced Arcadia nightly.

Rightly? That 's simply: 't is to see
Some substance casts these shadows
Which we call Life and History,
That aimless seem to chase and flee
Like wind-gleams over meadows.

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Simply? That's nobly: 't is to know
That God may still be met with,
Nor groweth old, nor doth bestow
These senses fine, this brain aglow,
To grovel and forget with.

Beauty, Herr Doctor, trust in me,
No chemistry will win you;
Charis still rises from the sea:
If you can't find her, *might* it be
Because you seek within you?

A FAMILIAR EPISTLE TO A FRIEND

ALIKE I hate to be your debtor,
Or write a mere perfunctory letter;
For letters, so it seems to me,
Our careless quintessence should be,
Our real nature's truant play
When Consciousness looks t' other way;
Not drop by drop, with watchful skill,
Gathered in Art's deliberate still,
But life's insensible completeness
Got as the ripe grape gets its sweetness,
As if it had a way to fuse
The golden sunlight into juice.
Hopeless my mental pump I try;
The boxes hiss, the tube is dry;
As those petroleum wells that spout
Awhile like M. C.'s, then give out,

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My spring, once full as Arethusa,
Is a mere bore as dry 's Creusa;
And yet you ask me why I 'm glum,
And why my graver Muse is dumb.
Ah me! I 've reasons manifold
Condensed in one, — I 'm getting old!

When life, once past its fortieth year,
Wheels up its evening hemisphere,
The mind's own shadow, which the boy
Saw onward point to hope and joy,
Shifts round, irrevocably set
Tow'rd morning's loss and vain regret,
And, argue with it as we will,
The clock is unconverted still.

"But count the gains," I hear you say,
"Which far the seeming loss outweigh;
Friendships built firm 'gainst flood and wind
On rock-foundations of the mind;
Knowledge instead of scheming hope;
For wild adventure, settled scope;
Talents, from surface-ore profuse,
Tempered and edged to tools for use;
Judgment, for passion's headlong whirls;
Old sorrows crystalled into pearls;
Losses by patience turned to gains,
Possessions now, that once were pains;
Joy's blossom gone, as go it must,
To ripen seeds of faith and trust;
Why heed a snow-flake on the roof
If fire within keep Age aloof,

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Though blundering north-winds push and strain
With palms benumbed against the pane?"

My dear old Friend, you 're very wise;
We always are with others' eyes,
And see *so* clear! (our neighbor's deck on)
What reef the idiot 's sure to wreck on;
Folks when they learn how life has quizzed 'em
Are fain to make a shift with Wisdom,
And, finding she nor breaks nor bends,
Give her a letter to their friends.
Draw passion's torrent whoso will
Through sluices smooth to turn a mill,
And, taking solid toll of grist,
Forget the rainbow in the mist,
The exulting leap, the aimless haste
Scattered in iridescent waste;
Prefer who likes the sure esteem
To cheated youth's midsummer dream,
When every friend was more than Damon,
Each quicksand safe to build a fame on;
Believe that prudence snug excels
Youth's gross of verdant spectacles,
Through which earth's withered stubble seen
Looks autumn-proof as painted green, —
I side with Moses 'gainst the masses,
Take you the drudge, give me the glasses!
And, for your talents shaped with practice,
Convince me first that such the fact is;
Let whoso likes be beat, poor fool,
On life's hard stithy to a tool,
Be whoso will a ploughshare made,
Let me remain a jolly blade!

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What 's Knowledge, with her stocks and lands,
To gay Conjecture's yellow strands?
What 's watching her slow flock's increase
To ventures for the golden fleece?
What her deep ships, safe under lee,
To youth's light craft, that drinks the sea,
For Flying Islands making sail,
And failing where 't is gain to fail?
Ah me! Experience (so we 're told),
Time's crucible, turns lead to gold;
Yet what 's experience won but dross,
Cloud-gold transmuted to our loss?
What but base coin the best event
To the untried experiment?

'T was an old couple, says the poet,
That lodged the gods and did not know it;
Youth sees and knows them as they were
Before Olympus' top was bare;
From Swampscot's flats his eye divine
Sees Venus rocking on the brine,
With lucent limbs, that somehow scatter a
Charm that turns Doll to Cleopatra;
Bacchus (that now is scarce induced
To give Eld's lagging blood a boost),
With cymbals' clang and pards to draw him,
Divine as Ariadne saw him,
Storms through Youth's pulse with all his train
And wins new Indies in his brain;
Apollo (with the old a trope,
A sort of finer Mister Pope),
Apollo — but the Muse forbids;

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At his approach cast down thy lids,
And think it joy enough to hear
Far off his arrows singing clear;
He knows enough who silent knows
The quiver chiming as he goes;
He tells too much who e'er betrays
The shining Archer's secret ways.

Dear Friend, you 're right and I am wrong;
My quibbles are not worth a song,
And I sophistically tease
My fancy sad to tricks like these.
I could not cheat you if I would;
You know me and my jesting mood,
Mere surface-foam, for pride concealing
The purpose of my deeper feeling.
I have not spilt one drop of joy
Poured in the senses of the boy,
Nor Nature fails my walks to bless
With all her golden inwardness;
And as blind nestlings, unafraid,
Stretch up wide-mouthed to every shade
By which their downy dream is stirred,
Taking it for the mother-bird,
So, when God's shadow, which is light,
Unheralded, by day or night,
My wakening instincts falls across,
Silent as sunbeams over moss,
In my heart's nest half-conscious things
Stir with a helpless sense of wings,
Lift themselves up, and tremble long
With premonitions sweet of song.

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Be patient, and perhaps (who knows?)
These may be winged one day like those;
If thrushes, close-embowered to sing,
Pierced through with June's delicious sting;
If swallows, their half-hour to run
Star-breasted in the setting sun.
At first they 're but the unfledged proem,
Or songless schedule of a poem;
When from the shell they 're hardly dry
If some folks thrust them forth, must I?

But let me end with a comparison
Never yet hit upon by e'er a son
Of our American Apollo,
(And there 's where I shall beat them hollow,
If he indeed 's no courtly St. John,
But, as West said, a Mohawk Injun.)
A poem 's like a cruise for whales:
Through untried seas the hunter sails,
His prow dividing waters known
To the blue iceberg's hulk alone;
At last, on farthest edge of day,
He marks the smoky puff of spray;
Then with bent oars the shallop flies
To where the basking quarry lies;
Then the excitement of the strife,
The crimsoned waves, — ah, this is life!

But, the dead plunder once secured
And safe beside the vessel moored,
All that had stirred the blood before
Is so much blubber, nothing more,

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(I mean no pun, nor image so
Mere sentimental verse, you know,)
And all is tedium, smoke, and soil,
In trying out the noisome oil.

Yes, this *is* life! And so the bard
Through briny deserts, never scarred
Since Noah's keel, a subject seeks,
And lies upon the watch for weeks;
That once harpooned and helpless lying,
What follows is but weary trying.

Now I 've a notion, if a poet
Beat up for themes, his verse will show it;
I wait for subjects that hunt me,
By day or night won't let me be,
And hang about me like a curse,
Till they have made me into verse,
From line to line my fingers tease
Beyond my knowledge, as the bees
Build no new cell till those before
With limpid summer-sweet run o'er;
Then, if I neither sing nor shine,
Is it the subject's fault, or mine?

AN EMBER PICTURE

How strange are the freaks of memory!
The lessons of life we forget,
While a trifle, a trick of color,
In the wonderful web is set, —

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Set by some mordant of fancy,
And, spite of the wear and tear
Of time or distance or trouble,
Insists on its right to be there.

A chance had brought us together;
Our talk was of matters-of-course;
We were nothing, one to the other,
But a short half-hour's resource.

We spoke of French acting and actors,
And their easy, natural way:
Of the weather, for it was raining
As we drove home from the play.

We debated the social nothings
We bore ourselves so to discuss;
The thunderous rumors of battle
Were silent the while for us.

Arrived at her door, we left her
With a drippingly hurried adieu,
And our wheels went crunching the gravel
Of the oak-darkened avenue.

As we drove away through the shadow,
The candle she held in the door
From rain-varnished tree-trunk to tree-trunk
Flashed fainter, and flashed no more; —

Flashed fainter, then wholly faded
Before we had passed the wood;

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But the light of the face behind it
  Went with me and stayed for good.

The vision of scarce a moment,
  And hardly marked at the time,
It comes unbidden to haunt me,
  Like a scrap of ballad-rhyme.

Had she beauty? Well, not what they call so;
  You may find a thousand as fair;
And yet there 's her face in my memory
  With no special claim to be there.

As I sit sometimes in the twilight,
  And call back to life in the coals
Old faces and hopes and fancies
  Long buried, (good rest to their souls!)

Her face shines out in the embers;
  I see her holding the light,
And hear the crunch of the gravel
  And the sweep of the rain that night.

'T is a face that can never grow older,
  That never can part with its gleam,
'T is a gracious possession forever,
  For is it not all a dream?

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TO H. W. L.

ON HIS BIRTHDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1867

I NEED not praise the sweetness of his song,
Where limpid verse to limpid verse succeeds
Smooth as our Charles, when, fearing lest he wrong
The new moon's mirrored skiff, he slides along,
Full without noise, and whispers in his reeds.

With loving breath of all the winds his name
Is blown about the world, but to his friends
A sweeter secret hides behind his fame,
And Love steals shyly through the loud acclaim
To murmur a *God bless you!* and there ends.

As I muse backward up the checkered years
Wherein so much was given, so much was lost,
Blessings in both kinds, such as cheapen tears, —
But hush! this is not for profaner ears;
Let them drink molten pearls nor dream the cost.

Some suck up poison from a sorrow's core,
As naught but nightshade grew upon earth's ground;
Love turned all his to heart's-ease, and the more
Fate tried his bastions, she but forced a door
Leading to sweeter manhood and more sound.

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Even as a wind-waved fountain's swaying shade
  Seems of mixed race, a gray wraith shot with
    sun,
So through his trial faith translucent rayed
Till darkness, half disnatured so, betrayed
  A heart of sunshine that would fain o'errun.

Surely if skill in song the shears may stay
  And of its purpose cheat the charmed abyss,
If our poor life be lengthened by a lay,
He shall not go, although his presence may,
  And the next age in praise shall double this.

Long days be his, and each as lusty-sweet
  As gracious natures find his song to be;
May Age steal on with softly-cadenced feet
Falling in music, as for him were meet
  Whose choicest verse is harsher-toned than he!

THE NIGHTINGALE IN THE STUDY

"Come forth!" my catbird calls to me,
  "And hear me sing a cavatina
That, in this old familiar tree,
  Shall hang a garden of Alcina.

"These buttercups shall brim with wine
  Beyond all Lesbian juice or Massic;
May not New England be divine?
  My ode to ripening summer classic?

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"Or, if to me you will not hark,
By Beaver Brook a thrush is ringing
Till all the alder-coverts dark
Seem sunshine-dappled with his singing.

"Come out beneath the unmastered sky,
With its emancipating spaces,
And learn to sing as well as I,
Without premeditated graces.

"What boot your many-volumed gains,
Those withered leaves forever turning,
To win, at best, for all your pains,
A nature mummy-wrapt in learning?

"The leaves wherein true wisdom lies
On living trees the sun are drinking;
Those white clouds, drowsing through the skies,
Grew not so beautiful by thinking.

"'Come out!' with me the oriole cries,
Escape the demon that pursues you!
And, hark, the cuckoo weatherwise,
Still hiding farther onward, wooes you."

"Alas, dear friend, that, all my days,
Hast poured from that syringa thicket
The quaintly discontinuous lays
To which I hold a season-ticket,

"A season-ticket cheaply bought
With a dessert of pilfered berries,

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And who so oft my soul hast caught
With morn and evening voluntaries,

"Deem me not faithless, if all day
Among my dusty books I linger,
No pipe, like thee, for June to play
With fancy-led, half-conscious finger.

"A bird is singing in my brain
And bubbling o'er with mingled fancies,
Gay, tragic, rapt, right heart of Spain
Fed with the sap of old romances.

"I ask no ampler skies than those
His magic music rears above me,
No falser friends, no truer foes, —
And does not Doña Clara love me?

"Cloaked shapes, a twanging of guitars,
A rush of feet, and rapiers clashing,
Then silence deep with breathless stars,
And overhead a white hand flashing.

"O music of all moods and climes,
Vengeful, forgiving, sensuous, saintly,
Where still, between the Christian chimes,
The Moorish cymbal tinkles faintly!

"O life borne lightly in the hand,
For friend or foe with grace Castilian!
O valley safe in Fancy's land,
Not tramped to mud yet by the million!

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"Bird of to-day, thy songs are stale
To his, my singer of all weathers,
My Calderon, my nightingale,
My Arab soul in Spanish feathers.

"Ah, friend, these singers dead so long,
And still, God knows, in purgatory,
Give its best sweetness to all song,
To Nature's self her better glory."

IN THE TWILIGHT

MEN say the sullen instrument,
That, from the Master's bow,
With pangs of joy or woe,
Feels music's soul through every fibre sent,
Whispers the ravished strings
More than he knew or meant;
Old summers in its memory glow;
The secrets of the wind it sings;
It hears the April-loosened springs;
And mixes with its mood
All it dreamed when it stood
In the murmurous pine-wood
Long ago!

The magical moonlight then
Steeped every bough and cone;
The roar of the brook in the glen
Came dim from the distance blown;

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The wind through its glooms sang low,
And it swayed to and fro
With delight as it stood,
In the wonderful wood,
Long ago!

O my life, have we not had seasons
That only said, Live and rejoice?
That asked not for causes and reasons,
But made us all feeling and voice?
When we went with the winds in their blowing,
When Nature and we were peers,
And we seemed to share in the flowing
Of the inexhaustible years?
Have we not from the earth drawn juices
Too fine for earth's sordid uses?
Have I heard, have I seen
All I feel, all I know?
Doth my heart overween?
Or could it have been
Long ago?

Sometimes a breath floats by me,
An odor from Dreamland sent,
That makes the ghost seem nigh me
Of a splendor that came and went,
Of a life lived somewhere, I know not
In what diviner sphere,
Of memories that stay not and go not,
Like music heard once by an ear
That cannot forget or reclaim it,

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A something so shy, it would shame it
To make it a show,
A something too vague, could I name it,
For others to know,
As if I had lived it or dreamed it,
As if I had acted or schemed it,
Long ago!

And yet, could I live it over,
This life that stirs in my brain,
Could I be both maiden and lover,
Moon and tide, bee and clover,
As I seem to have been, once again,
Could I but speak it and show it,
This pleasure more sharp than pain,
That baffles and lures me so,
The world should once more have a poet,
Such as it had
In the ages glad,
Long ago!

THE FOOT-PATH

It mounts athwart the windy hill
Through sallow slopes of upland bare,
And Fancy climbs with foot-fall still
Its narrowing curves that end in air.

By day, a warmer-hearted blue
Stoops softly to that topmost swell;

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Its thread-like windings seem a clue
To gracious climes where all is well.

By night, far yonder, I surmise
An ampler world than clips my ken,
Where the great stars of happier skies
Commingle nobler fates of men.

I look and long, then haste me home,
Still master of my secret rare;
Once tried, the path would end in Rome,
But now it leads me everywhere.

Forever to the new it guides,
From former good, old overmuch;
What Nature for her poets hides,
'T is wiser to divine than clutch.

The bird I list hath never come
Within the scope of mortal ear;
My prying step would make him dumb,
And the fair tree, his shelter, sear.

Behind the hill, behind the sky,
Behind my inmost thought, he sings;
No feet avail; to hear it nigh,
The song itself must lend the wings.

Sing on, sweet bird, close hid, and raise
Those angel stairways in my brain,
That climb from these low-vaulted days
To spacious sunshines far from pain.

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Sing when thou wilt, enchantment fleet,
I leave thy covert haunt untrod,
And envy Science not her feat
To make a twice-told tale of God.

They said the fairies tript no more,
And long ago that Pan was dead;
'T was but that fools preferred to bore
Earth's rind inch-deep for truth instead.

Pan leaps and pipes all summer long,
The fairies dance each full-mooned night,
Would we but doff our lenses strong,
And trust our wiser eyes' delight.

City of Elf-land, just without
Our seeing, marvel ever new,
Glimpsed in fair weather, a sweet doubt
Sketched-in, mirage-like, on the blue.

I build thee in yon sunset cloud,
Whose edge allures to climb the height;
I hear thy drowned bells, inly-loud,
From still pools dusk with dreams of night.

Thy gates are shut to hardiest will,
Thy countersign of long-lost speech, —
Those fountained courts, those chambers still,
Fronting Time's far East, who shall reach?

I know not, and will never pry,
But trust our human heart for all;

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Wonders that from the seeker fly
Into an open sense may fall.

Hide in thine own soul, and surprise
The password of the unwary elves;
Seek it, thou canst not bribe their spies;
Unsought, they whisper it themselves.

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